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2015 COPA AMERICA

SPECIAL PREVIEW

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Barcelona-Juventus showdown in Berlin

PREVIEW

WOMEN'S WORLD CUP

Canada hosts the biggest tournament yet

Alexis Sanchez

Profile

Arsenal star's Copa challenge

PLUS

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- SVEN GORAN ERIKSSON

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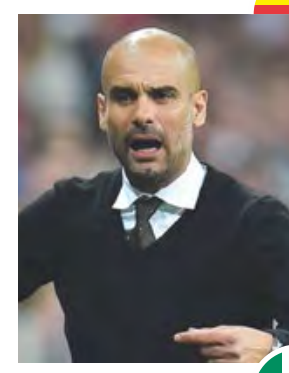
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In Pictures

The global game caught on camera

BRAZIL...fireworks illuminate the Belo Horizonte sky before the all-Brazilian Libertadores Cup game between Atletico Mineiro and Internacional

ARGENTINA...police protect River Plate coach Marcelo Gallardo during a game at Boca Juniors' La Bombonera stadium

ECUADOR... Sebastian Martinez gives his shirt to Universidad de Chile fans after a Libertadores Cup defeat away to Emelec

PORTUGAL...Sporting Lisbon defender Cedric Soares outjumps Leandro Souza of Moreirense

GERMANY...Bayern Munich goalkeeper Manuel Neuer misses in the penalty shoot-out to give Borussia Dortmund victory in the German Cup semi-final

SPAIN...Cristiano Ronaldo grimaces as another chance is missed by Real Madrid in their Champions League semi-final against Juventus

OMAN...Kim Kyung-jung of Qatari's Al Rayyan is crowded out against Al Seeb in the Gulf Club Cup Champions League

PICTURES OF THE MONTH QR CODE

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FROM THE EDITOR

So much for a quiet summer. We normally spend this time of year reviewing the season's major events and, in a World Cup or European Championship year, previewing the big summer tournament. But this year, the schedule has allowed us to take a detailed look at a host of different events taking place this summer.

The Copa America, being played for the first time in four years, is the headline act (page 50), while the Women's World Cup (page 76) is growing in stature. It is hard to preview the European Under-21 Championship (page 24) and the Under-20 World Cup (page 78) because the bigger story tends to be the young players who emerge from the tournament.

> The Copa America, which is being played for the first time in four years, is this summer's headline act

We've even found space to take a look, in a roundabout way, at the Beach World Cup (page 90), as well as the Champions League Final (page 34) and the Europa League Final (page 79).

All these previews mean that next month, in a special edition, we will review the European club season in detail, with the continent's 24 top leagues analysed.

See you then.

Gavin Hamilton, Editor

10 SIGNIFICANT EVENTS THIS MONTH

1 Juventus reach their first European Cup Final for 12 years ..... page 34
2 Barcelona beat Bayern Munich in Champions League semi.... page 36
3 Spanish players' strike averted ..... page 80
4 Blatter set for fifth term ..... page 16
5 Carpi win promotion to Italy's Serie A ..... page 28
6 Chile host the 2015 Copa America ..... page 50
7 Club America win the CONCACAF Champions League ..... page 88
8 Brazil sack coach ahead of Under-20 World Cup ..... page 78
9 Women's World Cup kicks off in Canada ..... page 76
10 Czech Republic prepares to host the European Under-21s ..... page 24

Ortega...playing for his club side, San Martin Burzaco

ARGENTINA

League suspended after player dies of head injury

All league football in Argentina was suspended for a weekend after San Martin Burzaco's Emanuel Ortega died as a result of serious head injuries.

Ortega, 21, collided with an opposition player and crashed into a concrete wall close to the pitch during a Primera C match against Juventud Unida.

He had emergency surgery on a double skull fracture but died five days later in hospital.

San Martin manager Cristian Ferlauto said it was "crazy" and "a disgrace" to have a wall so close to the pitch. He explained: "The wall is just a metre from the line, there's no protection."

Ferlauto absolved the opponent of blame, saying he had "no intent" to injure Ortega.

Ortega's death followed that of former Belgium under-21 defender Gregory Mertens, who died three days after collapsing with a heart-related illness during a reserve-team game for Lokeren against Genk.

He had joined Lokeren last summer from Cercle Brugge and played 15 league games this season.

Tragedy...Ortega's collision was seen on television

"Seeing PSG score six, says nothing to me. There's a lack of emotion. It's the triumph of football business"

Jean-Pierre Caillot, the president of Ligue 1 club Reims, vents his spleen at the overwhelming financial muscle of the Qatari-backed Paris Saint-Germain

GERMANY

Schalke sack Sam and Boateng

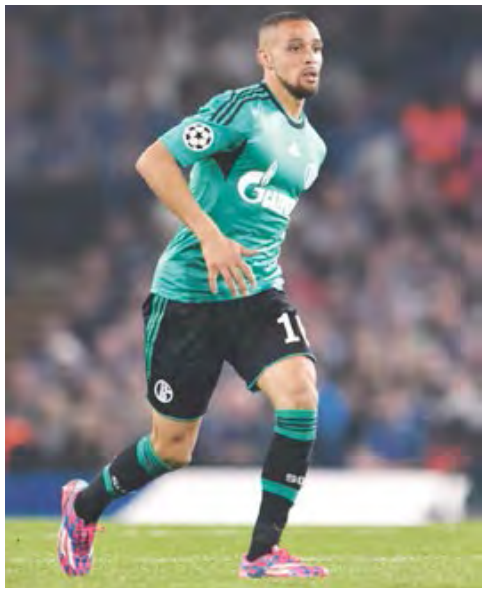
Disappointing...Boateng has not been at his best

Schalke reacted to the 2-0 Bundesliga defeat by Cologne by releasing midfielder Kevin-Prince Boateng and striker Sidney Sam with immediate effect.

The result put Schalke's European hopes for next season at risk and sports director Horst Heldt warned there would be consequences following a run of poor form that saw the club win only one of their last eight games.

"If someone isn't prepared to do things our way, there's no point him training with us," said Heldt. Boateng, a former Ghana international, and Sam, who has won five caps for Germany, were among the top earners at the Ruhr valley club.

But Sam has started only seven league games this season, while Boateng has been criticised for poor performances.



Summer signing...Sam joined from Leverkusen

HEROES & VILLAINS

Promoted...Bournemouth reach the Premier League

BOURNEMOUTH

Seven years after going into administration and then almost dropping out of the Football League, they were promoted to the English top flight for the first time in their history.

XAVI

Became only the eighth player to make 500 appearances in La Liga when he came on as a substitute in Barcelona's 2-0 victory at Espanyol.

GEORGE DOWELL

Paralysed from the chest down in a car crash six years ago when a promising 16-year-old playing for English eighth-tier side Worthing, he has now bought the financially troubled club with the compensation money he received and plans to guide them up the football pyramid.

PHILIP COCU

Became only the third person to win the Dutch title with PSV Eindhoven as both player and coach, following Eric Gerets and Ronald Koeman, as the club won their first Eredivisie championship for six years.

Success...Cocu has win the league as a player and coach

REYNALD TEYMARII

Former FIFA ExCo member was banned from football for eight years for accepting money from the former Asian Football Confederation chief, Mohamed Bin Hammam.

GERMAN DENIS

The Atalanta forward was banned for five matches after he burst into the opposition dressing room and punched Empoli defender Lorenzo Tonelli.

Banned...Denis attacked an opponent after a game

BANIK MOST

After nine defeats in a row, directors of the Czech second division club threatened their players with lie-detector tests after they were suspected of match fixing.

MOHAMMAD REZA KHANZADEH

The Iran international has been suspended for nine months after he attacked a fan in Qatar after his side, Persepolis, lost 3-0 to Lekhwiya in the AFC Champions League.

Suspended...Iran defender Khanzadeh

"The money evidently has disappeared"

Ivory Coast forward Salomon Kalou reveals that the squad has yet to receive its bonus for winning this year's African Nations Cup

GOALS we'd like to see again

To see video footage of these goals, and many more that we have selected, scan the QR code using any free QR reader that can be downloaded to your smartphone. You can also see the videos by logging on to http://po.st/pcOG3W

1 LEE DONG-GOOK
Jeonbuk Motors v Kashiwa Reysol
Controls the ball on his chest and then scores with a bicycle kick.

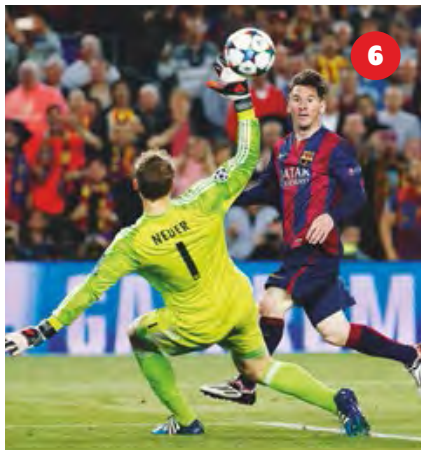
2 RAFAEL CARIOCA
Atletico Mineiro v Colo Colo
Takes the weight off the pass with his first touch before striking the ball on the volley.

3 YEVHEN SHAKHOV
Dnipro v Club Brugge
A fluent counter-attack by the Ukrainian side is finished in style for the only goal in both legs of this Europa League quarter-final clash.

4 PHILIPPE MEXES
Milan v Genoa
The French defender hits an unstoppable shot from outside the area that crashes in off of the crossbar.

5 HAKAN CALHANOGLU
Bayer Leverkusen v Bayern Munich
Curls a free-kick over the wall and into the bottom corner to give Bayern keeper Manuel Neuer no chance.

6 LIONEL MESSI
Barcelona v Bayern Munich
Leaves defender Jerome Boateng flat on his back before dinking the ball neatly over Neuer.

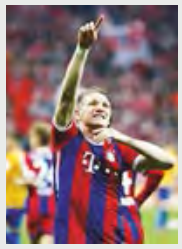


WINNERS

CLUB AMERICA
The Mexican side came from behind to win 5-3 on aggregate against Montreal Impact in the CONCACAF Champions League Final.

ANDREA PIRLO
The 35-year-old midfielder won a fifth successive champions' medal in Serie A – four with current side Juventus and one with Milan.

BASTIAN SCHWEINSTEIGER
Equalled Oliver Kahn and Mehmet Scholl's haul of eight Bundesliga wins. All three players won their titles with Bayern Munich.



SAN LORENZO
The defending Libertadores Cup champions were knocked out of this year's competition at the group stage.

WESTERN SYDNEY WANDERERS
The holders went out of this year's AFC Champions League despite beating favourites Guangzhou Evergrande.

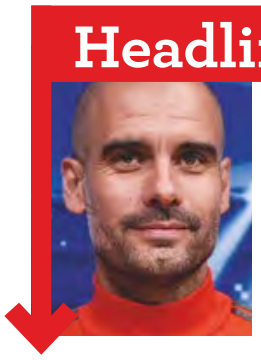
STEFAN BARBOIANU
The midfielder was sacked by Dinamo Bucharest after being accused of deliberately giving away a penalty against bitter city rivals Steaua.

LOSERS

"It was already difficult to know the exact identity of a player's agent. Now it's going to be worse"

Jean-Pierre Louvel, the head of the association of French pro clubs, predicts chaos after FIFA calls time on its system of licensing agents

Headliner



Pep Guardiola

Bayern coach backs 'Justice for Topo' campaign

More often than not, Pep Guardiola is dressed as stylishly as his teams play football. It is either a sharp suit or a smart, club tracksuit. So to see the Bayern Munich coach in a T-shirt for a Champions League press conference was a surprise. UEFA, however, was more than surprised and promptly began disciplinary proceedings against him.

Guardiola's misdemeanour was to wear a T-shirt bearing the words "*Justicia Para Topo*". It was Guardiola's contribution to the campaign for justice for Argentinian journalist Jorge Lopez. Known as "Topo", he was killed in an accident involving a speeding police car in Sao Paulo on the eve of the World Cup semi-final last July, while reporting for Argentinian media.

European football's governing body viewed Guardiola's decision – he had not been asked by anyone close to Lopez to wear it – as an incident of "non-sporting nature". UEFA bans anything "offensive, malicious, provocative, political or racial or sectarian" inside stadiums. Guardiola assured Lopez's family that he would wear the T-shirt with larger letters next time.

"The disciplinary action by UEFA had a positive effect among people in Latin America and Europe," says journalist Veronica Brunati, who is trying to garner support for her campaign for justice for her late husband. "It made people question the organisation."

Brunati wants action from both UEFA and FIFA, saying world football's governing organisation failed to act over the death of an accredited journalist working at the World Cup.

Many assumed Lopez was known as Topo, which means mole or spy in Spanish, because of his ability to seek out the best information and secure top-name interviews. It was, in fact, a childhood nickname, because of his teeth, though it later doubled up as the perfect professional moniker. Topo was as likely to be found huddled in the press pack after a training session at River Plate as he was loitering in the airport outside Buenos Aires in the early hours, hoping to speak to a player arriving from Europe for international duty.

He was as well known for his work as his practical jokes in the newsroom. Crank calls to colleagues pretending to be a radio journalist from Colombia or Ecuador are remembered as Topo classics.

Killed...Argentinian journalist Lopez

Barcelona is as central to this story as Buenos Aires. Lopez was working in Catalonia when he heard about a promising Argentinian teenager in the club's youth system who had broken his nose and was in hospital.

Lopez took the youngster a shirt signed by the club's Argentinian striker Javier Saviola and soon forged a close relationship with the Messi family. He would later be the journalist closest to Lionel Messi, treading a fine line between virtual spokesperson and journalist.

Messi led the tributes to Topo immediately after Argentina's semi-final win against Holland in Brazil. Since then, Diego Maradona, Javier Mascherano and Angel Di Maria are among those who have publicly lent their name and support to the campaign.

Lopez's family is facing a £50,000 legal bill for the trial in Brazil and, at first, River Plate, the club Topo reported on and who his son now supports, offered legal service. But unable to foot the bill as a club, their vice-president Jorge Brito is now helping the family. However, there are complications in the civil and penal trial, including falsified police reports, and there is an arduous and painful journey ahead.

Joel Richards

"The disciplinary action by UEFA had a positive effect among people in Latin America and Europe. It made people question the organisation"

Veronica Brunati, wife of the late Jorge Lopez

Defiant...Guardiola says he will wear a T-shirt with larger letters next time

"I think there will be even more teams sanctioned by FIFA. Too much haste in making signings comes with its dangers"

Getafe president, Angel Torres suggests Real Madrid, Atletico Madrid and others will receive transfer bans for the improper signing of youngsters

Headliner

Cuauhtemoc Blanco

Controversial Mexican calls it a day...aged 42

The last great idol of Mexican football has finally retired. More so than Hugo Sanchez, Rafael Marquez and Javier Hernandez – all much better-known internationally – the player who has aroused more passions and made more headlines in Mexico is Cuauhtemoc Blanco.

And on April 21, 2015, at the age of 42, he walked away from football in the same way he had always played the game: showcasing his talent, earning accolades and generating controversy.

Unlike Sanchez, Marquez and Hernandez, who all emerged from middle-class families, Blanco grew up in Tepito, one of the poorest areas of Mexico City and a place where city dwellers only went to purchase illegal goods.

Despite his immense talent, Blanco made his first start later than most, a few days before turning 20, with Club America, considered the team of Mexico's rich, in the first of many paradoxes in his career.

Two seasons later, he became a regular in the side under Leo Beenhakker, who taught him to use his ability for the benefit of the team and sowed the seeds of the player he would eventually become. Three years later, Blanco amazed the world at France 98 with a reverse scissor-kick goal against Belgium and his famous "Cuauhteminha" – a bunny-hop jump with the ball between his feet, against South Korea.

After the World Cup, Beenhakker, then back in Holland, wanted to take Blanco to Feyenoord, but after weeks of trying to make contact he gave up. Blanco had been holidaying with friends in Acapulco and was not available to anyone, not even the veteran Dutch coach.

His chance in Europe finally came in 2000 after an incredible season, beginning with the 1999 Confederations Cup title and ending with the semi-finals of the Libertadores Cup, in which Club America lost an epic battle against eventual champions Boca Juniors.

He joined Valladolid in Spain, but just weeks after donning his new shirt he injured a knee playing for Mexico against Trinidad & Tobago and was sidelined for eight months. Sad and lonely, he returned home just in time to help "*El Tri*" qualify for Korea/Japan 2002, inspiring a team that was on the verge of elimination.

Two days after scoring twice in a victory over Honduras, he failed to board a plane for a friendly in Spain and, to everyone's surprise, announced his international retirement, claiming mistreatment by the Mexican FA. Unconfirmed rumours suggested, however, that he didn't make the trip because he had lost track of time while celebrating the night before.

Of course, he was soon back in the fold and was Mexico's best player at the 2002 World Cup. But he wasn't in Germany in 2006 because the coach was his sworn enemy, Ricardo La Volpe, who refused to call him up. The pair had history, having fallen out after La Volpe took over as Club America coach in 1996.

Blanco returned after the tournament, but was removed again, by Sven Goran Eriksson in 2008, after he broke a curfew and returned to a training camp at 5am. Blanco announced his international retirement for the second time – only to return a few months later to help Mexico qualify for South Africa 2010.

Send-off...Blanco is hoisted by his team-mates after Puebla's Cup victory

"When I'm mayor, I won't make mistakes"

Blanco on his intended new career

At 37, he played in his third World Cup, scoring a penalty against France then setting up Hernandez a few minutes later as Mexico claimed a famous victory. In May 2014 he quit for a third time, but said he would play in the World Cup "if needed". This time it was not to be.

A year on and there was to be a final twist. His latest club, Puebla, had rescued him after four years playing in the Mexican second tier and, despite being a regular substitute in the league, he led a reserve side that reached the Cup Final against Guadalajara, the country's most popular club and Blanco's most hated opponent.

Amazingly, Puebla, one of the weakest teams in Mexican football, won 4-2 and Blanco lifted the trophy in a fairy-tale ending, having announced beforehand he was quitting football because he "couldn't stand it any more". Afterwards he ranted that the club's owner had tampered with the team so that he didn't start the Final.

After a fitting ending to a controversial career, it somehow seems only right he has set his sights on the murky world of politics and intends to stand for election as mayor of Cuernavaca.

Martin Del Palacio Langer

"The review commission are a bunch of clowns"

Shana Sonck, the partner of Gent striker Laurent Depoitre, after the Belgian league's disciplinary board suspended him for an over-the-top challenge on Club Brugge's Oscar Duarte

Notebook

Highlights from some of our regular on-line contributions

SPAIN

Cordoba became the first team to be relegated from La Liga as a silent Arcangel stadium watched their team torn apart 8-0 by Barcelona.

"What you saw was the difference between the team at the top and the team at the bottom," said Cordoba's caretaker coach Jose Antonio Romero.

It had taken Cordoba over 40 years to reach the top flight – and not even an entire season to leave it again. By the end the fans were resigned to their fate, but there had been anger too. They protested about poor management at a club where there have been three different coaches this term and a squad put together at the last minute that was not good enough.

Luis Suarez scored his first Barca hat-trick, taking his season's total to 24, even though he did not make his debut until week nine.

Sid Lowe

Opener...Suarez is on his way to a hat-trick as Barcelona send Cordoba down

ITALY

Plucky Parma, long since destined for Serie B next season, continue to see out the season with dignity. Since the beginning of April they have picked up nine points: winning against Juventus and Palermo, and drawing with Internazionale, Empoli and Napoli.

The 2-2 draw with Napoli, however, ended in ugly scenes as players and team officials tried to keep Parma goalkeeper Antonio Mirante and Napoli's Argentinian striker Gonzalo Higuain from coming to blows.

Parma coach Roberto Donadoni launched some heavy post-match accusations at Napoli, claiming his players had been insulted throughout regarding their impending relegation and the possibility that the club could go into liquidation.

"Starting with Higuain, the Napoli players called us 'failures' right through the game," said Donadoni. "We're giving it our all and this lot insult us by saying we are failures and due for relegation. They probably thought they would pick up three handy points but we will honour Parma right until the very last second of the season."

Paddy Agnew

Flashpoint...Mirante (in white) is held back by team-mates

Covered...Dortmund lost on the field but not off it

GERMANY

With Borussia Dortmund out of the Champions League qualifying picture for the first time in five years, the revelation on the Bloomberg business media platform that the Ruhr giants had insured themselves against missing out on elite European action – and would thus be recouping much of their lost income – did not particularly shock the Bundesliga community.

Despite "negative outcome" policies being outlawed in the English game on the grounds that it could lead to match fixing, it is estimated that around 10 German clubs have such "Prize Indemnity" cover. And according to Cologne's director of sport, Jorg Schmadtke, there is nothing untoward in the practice

"It's about protecting the business for the next year," says Schmadtke. "It's a legitimate move you can make and I don't find it objectionable."

Oliver Roth, a former Dortmund player turned financial expert, agrees, adding: "The club pulled off a fantastic coup. Very farsighted of them."

Nick Bidwell

Weekly notes from Brazil, Spain, Germany and Italy at **worldsoccer.com**

Keir RADNEDGE

THE INSIDER

Challengers sidelined as FIFA president prepares for fifth term

Losing battle...(from left) FIFA presidential candidates Figo, Van Praag and Prince Ali can only hope to prevent victory for incumbent Sepp Blatter in the first round of voting

On May 30, 1996, Joao Havelange sat down to dinner with the members of FIFA's executive committee. For the 80-year-old Brazilian the following day's business was already done and dusted; all that remained was the formality of opening the meeting and then a vote to award the finals of the 2002 World Cup to his long-time favourites, Japan.

But what Havelange heard over the next 45 minutes astonished him. Instead of a decisive majority in favour of the Japanese, around half of his ExCo, including all the Europeans, wanted host rights directed to South Korea.

Japan had been out there, campaigning for years, and their marketing experts and sponsors had played a key role in creating a new financial model for world sport.

Rewarding the Japanese with the World Cup was mere good manners. Or so Havelange had thought.

Now he had to think again – not only quickly but also strategically. And so Havelange came up with the concept, that was approved the following day, of co-hosting for the one and only time in World Cup history. The Japanese were understandably distraught as for them it was akin to defeat, while it felt like a victory for the Koreans.

For Havelange it was a wake-up call. Three years earlier he had seen off a putative attempt from his general secretary, Sepp Blatter, to pursue the presidency. Blatter had kept his job at the expense of sacking various other senior FIFA directors, but Havelange now understood that impatience with his reign was growing.

A year later he had let it be known that he would be retiring. He had dropped such hints before and always allowed himself – without much resistance – to be persuaded into carrying on. But this time he had seen the signs. Better to take the initiative for departure than be ultimately pushed aside.

Behind the scenes Havelange played a key role in assuring the presidential succession of Blatter to protect his legacy – although even Blatter, in the end, was forced to open up the ISL file which documented how Havelange and his rapacious son-in-law, Ricardo Teixeira, had helped themselves to millions of Swiss francs

FIFA PRESIDENTS

FIFA has had only eight presidents in its 111 years, three of which – Woolfall, Seeldrayers and Drewry – died in office. If Blatter serves until 2019 he would, at 83, be the oldest holder of the presidency. Jules Rimet holds the length of tenure record of 33 years.

Robert Guerin (France) 1904-1906
Daniel Burley Woolfall (England) 1906-18*
Jules Rimet (France) 1921-54
Rodolphe Seeldrayers (Belgium) 1954-55
Arthur Drewry (England) 1955-1961
Stanley Rous (England) 1961-74
Joao Havelange (Brazil) 1974-98
Sepp Blatter (Switzerland) 1998-present

(* FIFA had no president for three years after Woolfall's death and was administered by general secretary Cornelis Hirschman)

Rous...13 years at the helm

Blatter's domain... FIFA headquarters in Zurich

in TV rights commissions.

The "wake-up call" moment is the best for which Blatter's current challengers to his campaign for re-election to a fifth term can achieve, as all the polls agree that he will win by a clear majority at FIFA Congress in Zurich on May 29, with his earlier pledge to end his "mission" this year having long been consigned to the dustbin of football history.

Almost certainly Prince Ali bin Al Hussein, Michael Van Praag and Luis Figo will not be back on the worldwide hustings in 2019. FIFA's outgoing Asian vice-president, Holland's own federation chairman and the former World Player of the Year will have moved on with their lives by then. But their current, short-term ambition is to raise enough opposition to prevent Blatter winning in the first round of voting and thus jolting the 79-year-old Swiss into understanding that change is inevitable – even for a man who has spent 40 years at the heart of FIFA.

There are other potential candidates out there for 2019. Perhaps Jeffrey Webb, who curried favour with Blatter by barring the rival trio from addressing "his" CONCACAF Congress; perhaps Kuwait's Sheikh Ahmad Al Fahad Al Sabah, who was catapulted, unopposed, on to the FIFA ExCo. Perhaps even the German, Wolfgang Niersbach.

As for Michel Platini, he may have missed his moment.

In 2019 Platini will be "only" 63, but whether the Frenchman would really want to spend half his life flying the world, to the opening match and Final of each and every FIFA event, is open to question.

Last spring the UEFA president could have suggested, privately to Blatter, that he was ready to stand and the pair could have "arranged" the succession. Instead, Platini waited and whined, and whined and waited...and did so until his credibility as a challenger was shot. He had the words but not the deeds.

Once Platini pulled back, no one else had the clout to even threaten Blatter's continuance, let alone beat him.

A "wake-up call" moment is the best Blatter's challengers can achieve

HOW THE VOTE WORKS

To win in the first round of voting, a candidate must secure two-thirds – at least 140 of the maximum 209 votes from the FIFA member nations – which is something Blatter has done before.

In the second, and any other requisite ballot, a simple majority – which means more than 50 per cent – of the valid votes cast is sufficient.

If there are more than two candidates for the office of FIFA president, whoever obtains the lowest number of votes is eliminated from the second ballot onwards until only two candidates are left.

If there is only one candidate, more than half of the valid votes cast is sufficient in the first ballot.

BLATTER'S ELECTIONS

1998: Blatter 111, Lennart Johansson (Sweden) 80. (Johansson withdrew from a second ballot).
2002: Blatter 139, Issa Hayatou (Cameroon) 56.
2007*: Blatter unopposed.
2011 (203 votes): Blatter 186, postponement proposal 17.

(* The 2002 term had been extended on a one-off basis to remove the presidency vote from the eve of the World Cup finals).

Gill steps into the spotlight

David Gill, despite his initial better judgment, is about to become the most important English official in the world game. The former Manchester United chief executive will step up as the new British associations' vice-president of FIFA at Congress on May 29.

Gill was elected by the UEFA Congress in Vienna in a landslide 43 votes to 10 victory over Trefor Lloyd-Hughes, president of the Football Association of Wales.

Lloyd-Hughes had insisted on standing in angry protest against what he believed was a betrayal by the Football Association of an unwritten principle of rotation of the role among the four FAs.

In the past the role was a FIFA slot, but the British vice-presidency was scrapped in the reform process and Northern Ireland's Jim Boyce is stepping down.

UEFA decided, in response, to reserve one of its FIFA vice-presidencies for a representative from the British home associations, though Gill, concerned the FIFA role was overtly political, was reluctant at first to stand.

But he was persuaded, in the wake of FIFA's ongoing trials and tribulations, to change his mind by both UEFA president Michel Platini and FA chairman Greg Dyke.

Platini welcomed Gill aboard with a jest that "you English are never happy; now he can express it through the ExCo and not through the press".

FIFA's new man ...Gill

"It's not exactly the title of a horror film"

Luis Enrique complains about the sending-off of Jordi Alba (left) for saying "always me" to the ref in Barcelona's victory over local rivals Espanyol

PEOPLE ON THE MOVE

Appointments, sackings and loans

IN

First job...Milito

EUROPE

MICHAEL FRONTZECK replaced Tayfun Korkut as boss of Hanover for the last five games of the season.

Stopgap...Festa stepped in at Cagliari

Cagliari appointed **GIANLUCA FESTA** as coach until the end of the season, replacing Zdenek Zeman who stepped down a month after returning for his second spell.

Bayern Munich B-team boss **ERIK TEN HAG** is to take over from Robert Alflen as coach of Dutch side Utrecht.

Assistant **IGOR CHEREVCHENKO** took over as caretaker coach of Lokomotiv Moscow, 10 days before they were due to play in the Russian Cup Final, after Miodrag Bozovic resigned following a 3-1 loss to CSKA.

SARGIS HOVSEPYAN, who, is Armenia's all-time record appearance holder with 132 caps, was named caretaker coach of the national team.

LUBOSLAV PENEV became CSKA Sofia's third coach of the season, signing a deal until the end of the Bulgarian season.

Romanian side Astra replaced Dorinel Munteanu with **MARIUS SUMUDICA** as coach following a five-match winless run. **VALENTIN SINESCU** took over from Mircea Rednic at Petrolul Ploiesti.

SOUTH AMERICA

Ex-Barcelona defender **GABRIEL MILITO** was handed his first coaching job when he replaced Mauricio Pellegrino at Argentinian club Estudiantes.

AFRICA

STEPHEN KESHI finally agreed a two-year deal to coach Nigeria for a third time. He won the African Nations Cup in 2013 and later returned on a match-by-match deal, which ended in November last year after failure to reach the 2015 tournament.

FRANCOIS ZAHOUI, who took Ivory Coast to the African Nations Cup Final three years ago, was appointed national coach of Niger. Former Paris Saint-Germain and Athletic Bilbao boss **LUIS FERNANDEZ** took charge of Guinea and **YOHANNES SAHLE** was named boss of Ethiopia.

FATHI MABROUK replaced Juan Carlos Garrido as coach of Al Ahly after the Egyptian side failed to make the group stage of this season's CAF Champions League.

Portuguese coach **PAULO DUARTE**, who has coached Burkina Faso and Gabon in the past, took over from Ghazi Ghrairi as boss of Tunisian side CS Sfaxien.

ASIA

Uruguayan **DANIEL CARRENO** replaced Djamel Belmadi of Algeria as national coach of Qatar. **MIODRAG RADULOVIC** took over from Giuseppe Giannini as boss of Lebanon.

Rested...after a year out of the game, Tuchel is back in business

Dortmund turn to new boss Tuchel

Former Mainz boss **THOMAS TUCHEL** will take over from Jurgen Klopp as coach of Borussia Dortmund on July 1.

Tuchel spent five seasons at Mainz before stepping down a year ago. During his time at the club, Mainz qualified for European competition for the first time, while Tuchel earned a reputation as an innovative tactician.

OUT

EUROPE

Granada sacked coach **ABEL RESINO** with just four games of the Spanish season remaining.

Having initially been re-instated after his sacking by Romanian top-flight strugglers Ceahlaul Piatra Neamt, Brazilian coach **ZE MARIA** was sacked for a second time in a week following a league defeat by Botosani.

AFRICA

KHEIREDDINE MADOUI says he will quit reigning CAF Champions League holders ES Setif at the end of the Algerian league season.

ASIA

Australia defender **IVAN FRANJIC**, who moved to Russia from Brisbane Roar last year, quit Torpedo Moscow over unpaid wages.

No pay...Franjic (left)

Loss...Muller-Wohlfahrt feels he was unfairly blamed

Muller-Wohlfahrt quits his role with Bayern

Bayern Munich doctor **HANS-WILHELM MULLER-WOHLFAHRT** resigned after 38 years in the role, claiming that the club's medical department was blamed by coach Pep Guardiola for the Champions League quarter-final first-leg defeat by Porto.

Muller-Wohlfahrt, who also acts as the German national team doctor, has treated footballers from around the world, including Ronaldo and Michael Owen, as well as athletes such as Usain Bolt.

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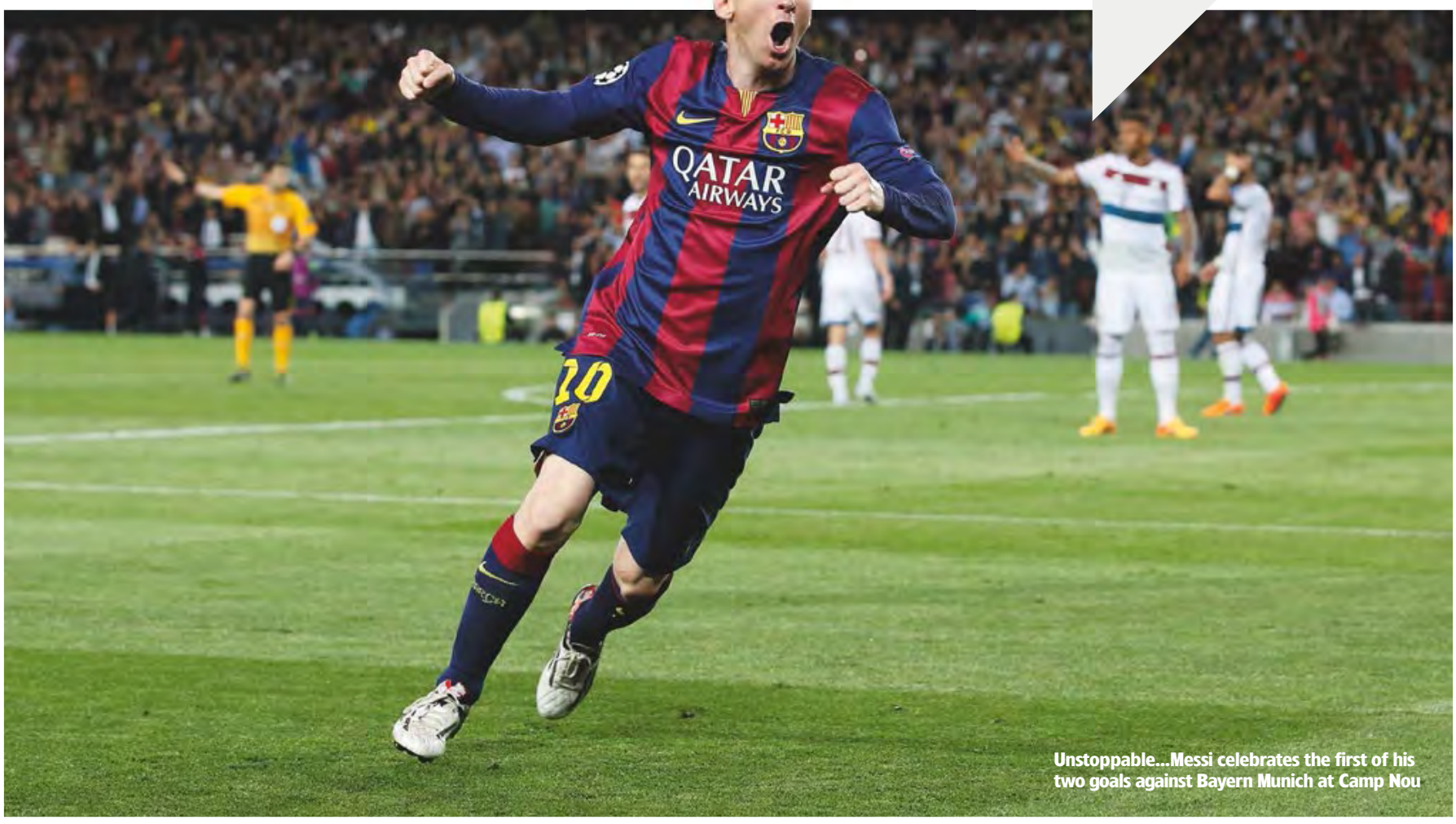

Unstoppable...Messi celebrates the first of his two goals against Bayern Munich at Camp Nou

Magical Messi, but Pele is still the greatest

Lionel Messi, the best of them all? After his devastating performance at Camp Nou against Bayern Munich for Barcelona, his two superbly taken goals and the way he left a bewildered Jerome Boateng sprawled in confusion on the ground, eulogies have proliferated. And one of the most fulsome of them came from none other than Graeme Souness, just after Jamie Redknapp had written that in bygone days a Souness wouldn't have let Messi get away with things.

Even before the semi-final first leg, Pep Guardiola, the former Barcelona boss now in charge at Bayern, had declared that Messi was unstoppable.

Yet if World Cup finals provide the ultimate criteria, there have to be some reservations. Messi has played in them twice. In 2014, despite some spectacular performances, several glorious goals and an inspired pass which one English journalist thought one of the best things seen in Brazil, his tournament ended in anti-climax. After his Argentina had been so narrowly beaten by Germany in the Final, and he himself had been awarded the Golden Ball however surprisingly – surely it should have gone to James Rodriguez – he showed no satisfaction in the award, bitterly remarking that his team had missed three good chances to score.

The fact is that fatigue blunted his formidable edge in the final games after he had excelled in his earlier matches. Yet how ironic that the goalkeeper he twice beat with such consummate ease at Camp Nou was the same Manuel Neuer who early in the second half of the World Cup Final should surely have been sent off for his flying assault on the hapless Argentinian striker Gonzalo Higuain, who was lucky to be able to stay on the field.

In the previous World Cup, Messi was a disappointment, not least, one felt, because Diego Maradona, as wretched a manager as he was glorious a footballer, insisted he stay out on the left wing. Conscious or unconscious rivalry? Who can say? Meanwhile, the Spurs manager Mauricio Pochettino, who once played with Maradona for Argentina, made Maradona his greatest player ever. Those two slaloms at the Azteca – against England, after the Hand of God goal, and Belgium – remain indelibly in the mind.

Standout...Pele scored in two World Cup Finals

For my own part, I would still rate Pele as the greatest player of all time. He was fabulously impressive in two World Cup Finals: the first as a mere 17-year-old in Sweden in 1958, with two astonishingly taken goals against a rugged Swedish defence in the Final; and then scoring a glorious header in the Azteca in the 1970 Final against Italy, plus the passes which set up Brazil's two ultimate goals.

And in second place I'd still put a star who never figured in the World Cup finals. Another Argentinian, Alfredo Di Stefano, was an inspiration and the omnipresent maestro of the Real Madrid team which won all five of the first European Cups.

> If World Cups provide the ultimate criteria, there have to be reservations

Memories of Jimmy Greaves

As one waits and fervently hopes for Jimmy Greaves to make a complete recovery from his severe stroke, the mind turns back to the 1966 World Cup Final in which, to his dismay, he didn't play.

Should he have done? I still think so. Not instead of Geoff Hurst, who had replaced him so successfully after his leg had been gashed by a French boot, but instead of Roger Hunt who, late in the first half of the Final, swung his weaker left foot at a ball adeptly nodded to him by Hurst and enabled the German keeper, Hans Tilkowski, to keep the tame shot out. It would have been a gift for Greaves' famed left foot.

I treasure a personal memory of our encounter the day before the Final on the spacious grounds of the Bank of England at Roehampton. Jimmy must have been in a state of high tension waiting to hear if he had been picked for the Final. Yet he came up to me cheerfully and said: "We must have another game next season, Brian." The reference was to a match between the so-called Tennis All Stars, for whom Jimmy played in goal, and my own little Sunday league side, Chelsea Casuals.

Speaking on the pre-tournament European tour where, wholly recovered from an attack of jaundice, he scored four goals against Norway in Oslo, he had said: "I think every player senses in the England team that we could all be on the edge of virtual immortality as far as the football's concerned. I think it's something you don't want to speak about. You hope

Relaxed...Greaves (left) and England team-mate Jimmy Armfield after training at Roehampton

to God you do the right thing at the right time. You've got to be honest. We're in with such a good chance it's unbelievable."

Four years earlier, in the Chilean World Cup, he had been curiously ineffectual. I once heard him say: "There are some good teams here playing some bloody rubbish, they're all afraid to hold the ball in case they get killed."

With 44 goals in 57 England games, his striking record was remarkable, as indeed it was with his cornucopia of goals for Chelsea, his original club, and Spurs who paid Milan £99,999 because manager Bill Nicholson didn't want them to be the first club to spend £100,000 on a player. He'd made a spectacular debut at Tottenham for Chelsea as a dynamic 17-year-old, fast, incisive, so hard to mark in the penalty box. Even in his short unhappy spell with Milan he managed to score nine goals.

Surveying the fire wreckage... Heginbotham (left) and Popplewell

Bradford: mixed messages over Popplewell findings

The 30th anniversary of the appalling and surely now suspicious Bradford City fire has been marked by a supremely well-researched book, *Fifty-Six: The Story of the Bradford Fire*, by Martin Fletcher, and a skilfully assembled play called *The 56*.

Is it horribly possible the fire wasn't just the result of sheer negligence by club and council – piles of rubbish accumulated under the floor of the wooden stand – but arson? Serious doubt is cast on the validity of the inquiry chaired by Mr Justice Oliver Popplewell, who I remember as the wicketkeeper of a fine Charterhouse cricket team captained by Peter May.

Popplewell himself has poured disdain on the book. And indeed it is well nigh impossible for all the apparent circumstantial evidence to prove that the then-Bradford City chairman, Stafford Heginbotham, had deliberately started the fire. But it is astonishing to learn several of his properties had previously burned down and in each case he had been heavily compensated by seemingly naive insurance companies. Since Heginbotham is now dead he can hardly be investigated.

Yet the latest revelations suggest Popplewell could be right and circumstantial evidence deceptive. We are told there was indeed a lighted cigarette dropped through the floorboards of the rickety old stand and that a man has admitted it was his fault.

Still more reason to deplore the fact that neither the club nor the council did anything about the fire hazard which was known for years. Could it just be Heginbotham had no real incentive to get the job done?

Relegated Rangers have plenty to blame

The spineless 6-0 capitulation by Queens Park Rangers at Manchester City represented a shocking betrayal of their fans, a damning indictment of their players and a considerable question mark over both Harry Redknapp, their previous manager, and the hapless Chris Ramsey, who feels against all obvious logic that he should continue in the job.

As good a coach as I am sure he is, Ramsey was left a difficult hand to play but can hardly be said to have played it well. That the team was too old seems beyond dispute and Harry must surely bear some responsibility for that.

I remember after watching QPR lose their first game of the season at home to Hull City from a headed corner. Harry said he thought that Rio Ferdinand, just signed in his distinguished dotage, had given a masterclass, when in fact at the corner he had failed to mark the scorer of the goal.

It appears that with a little ingenuity QPR could have avoided the £50million fine which now hangs over them for budgetary excesses, as Fulham and other clubs have done. Incompetence, then, seems hardly confined to the football field. But isn't there, as was mentioned on *Match of the Day,* something called parachute payments?

Down...Ramsey was unable to prevent Queens Park Rangers' relegation

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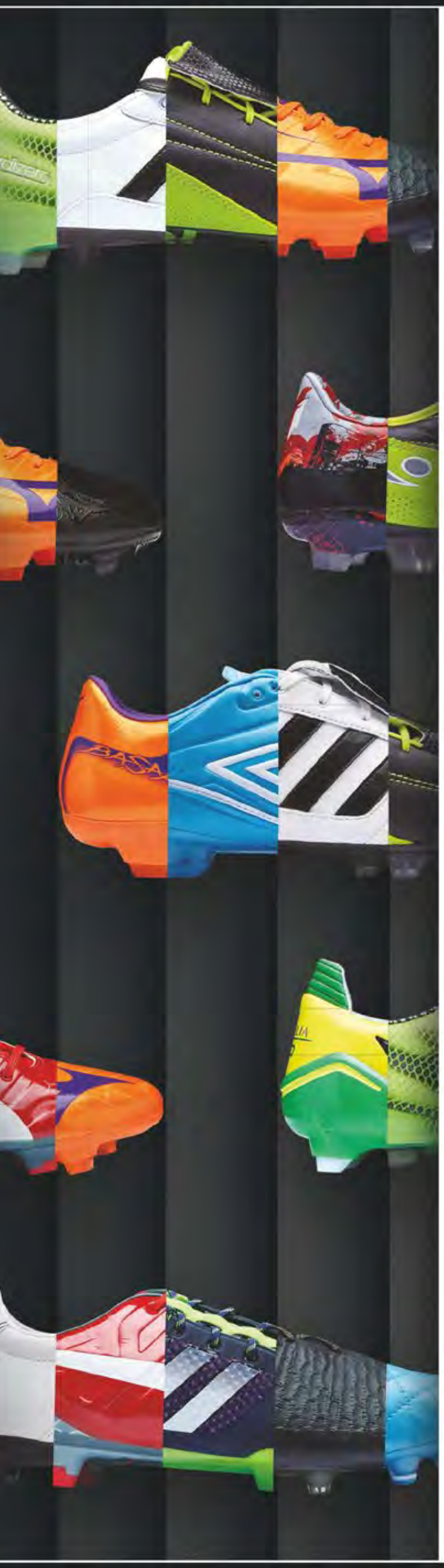

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Sam Beckwith reports from Prague

CZECH REPUBLIC

A tale of four stadiums

The Euro Under-21s' picturesque backdrop hides the domestic game's blemishes

With some pride, the Czech Republic hosts the most prestigious football tournament in its history, from June 17 to 30. However, in the absence of any stadium with a capacity in excess of 30,000, the eight-team European Under-21 Championship represents the pinnacle of Czech ambitions in this area.

Not surprisingly, the country is making the most of the event, but away from the tournament's smart stadiums and picturesque host cities, the domestic game remains a tangle of traditional power, new money and occasional dirty deals, all constrained by the economic realities of life in a post-Communist country.

In many ways, the four clubs whose home grounds will host the tournament – Slavia Prague, Sparta Prague, Sigma Olomouc and Slovacko – typify these contrasts.

Group A will be staged in Prague, at the homes of Czech football's two biggest rivals: Slavia's Eden Arena – which will also host the Final – and Sparta's Generali Arena. Group B is split between Andruv stadion in Olomouc and Slovacko's Stadion Miroslava Valenty in Uherske Hradiste.

Eden Arena

Slavia are traditionally the club of Prague's middle class and were Czechoslovakia's most successful club in the first half of the 20th century. However, the "Sesivani" suffered under Communist rule and didn't win the league again until 1996.

The Eden Arena in Prague's Vrsovice district has been Slavia's home since 1953, when the Communist regime forcibly ▸

Sparta...the Generali Arena is commonly known as "Letna"

GENERALI
ARENA
SPARTA

relocated the club to make way for a giant statue of Stalin. But when requirements for stadiums forced the club – then owned by ENIC, Tottenham Hotspur's owners – to completely rebuild the ground, they spent several years in exile, playing home games at Strahov, before a new 20,800-capacity Eden was opened in 2008.

Playing in the country's largest arena, Slavia won the league in their first season at the newly opened Eden and a new era beckoned. But, seemingly poised to overturn Sparta's dominance of Czech football, Slavia instead got into serious financial trouble.

The problems began in January 2008 when Slavia's board apparently allowed Key Investments, a shadowy Czech securities company, to take control of the club without ENIC's consent.

A protracted legal dispute followed as ENIC attempted to reclaim loans it had made to Slavia. Plagued by debts, the club came close to declaring bankruptcy and was forced to sell its interest in E Side Property Limited, the company that owned the new stadium.

The financial situation has since stabilised under current owner Ales Rebicek, a controversial former politician, but money remains tight.

In September last year, Rebicek struck a deal with Vinet, E Side's successor, to bring the club and stadium under common ownership again, with a view to making the club more attractive to would-be buyers.

Eden, meanwhile, remains an impressive stadium which was good enough to stage the UEFA Super Cup game between Chelsea and Bayern Munich at the start of last season. The irony for Slavia fans is that their own team is now far more focused on avoiding relegation than challenging for Europe.

Generali Arena

Commonly known as Letna, Sparta's Generali Arena will host three group games and a semi-final this summer. With a capacity of 19,784 the ground is slightly smaller than Eden but remains the first choice for international games, reflecting Sparta's dominant position in the post-Communist era.

The original Letna stadium dates back to 1917, although both Sparta and Slavia were playing games in the park of the same name at the end of the 19th century. The stadium's current appearance owes much to the former Sparta owner Petr Mach, who transformed the ground into a modern all-seater in 1994. Subsequent improvements saw Letna host Sparta's first Champions League group games in 1997 – the first of six such campaigns.

In recent years, however, qualification for the Champions League has become more a hope than an expectation, partly due to the emergence of provincial club Viktoria Plzen as a new force in Czech football.

This new rivalry reached absurd heights in 2012 when Sparta's current owner, Daniel Kretinsky, presented Czech FA chairman Miroslav Pelta with a black bag allegedly containing evidence that Plzen were "systematically" bribing referees.

Pelta was impressed, describing the evidence as "devastating" and handed it over to the authorities. In January last year, however, a court cleared Martin "Rattlesnake" Svoboda, the man alleged to have acted as Plzen's go-between.

Chequered history... the Miroslava Valenty

Another headache for Kretinsky, and for Czech football as a whole, is crowd trouble. A growing hooliganism problem reached a head in March 2014 when fighting broke out between fans of Sparta and their bitter rivals Banik Ostrava during a televised league game. In the wake of the Ostrava riot, Pelta has worked with the interior ministry to improve security in Czech stadiums, with measures including closer co-operation with the police, the creation of a database of known troublemakers and more stringent checks outside stadiums.

The lengths to which the FA is prepared to go to ensure security became apparent at last season's Czech Cup Final between Sparta and Plzen at Eden Arena.

Amid fears that the game would be targeted by radical hooligans, the FA limited ticket sales to small groups of supporters behind each goal. The measures were effective but they ruined a potential showcase.

Impressive... Slavia's Eden Arena

Less successfully, Pelta has also tried to curb obscene chanting in stadiums, encouraging referees to halt and potentially abandon games whenever it took place. The widely ridiculed initiative has been dropped this season.

Andruv stadion

Moravia, the eastern region of the Czech Republic, will stage Group B in two smaller stadiums. In addition to three group games, Olomouc, the Czech Republic's sixth-largest city, will also host one semi-final. The pretty university town is home to Sigma Olomouc, currently in the second division but still one of the country's better-supported teams.

Sigma's Andruv stadion, opened in 1940, has undergone a series of reconstructions, most recently in 2010, and now has a

Bank of colours...the steep, futuristic stand behind the goal at the Andruv stadion

EUROPEAN UNDER-21 CHAMPIONSHIP

GROUP A
17.06.15
Czech Republic v Denmark
(Eden Arena)
17.06.15
Germany v Serbia
(Generali Arena)
20.06.15
Serbia v Czech Republic
(Generali Arena)
20.06.15
Germany v Denmark
(Eden Arena)
23.06.15
Czech Republic v Germany
(Eden Arena)
23.06.15
Denmark v Serbia
(Generali Arena)

GROUP B
18.06.15
Italy v Sweden
(Andruv stadion)
18.06.15
England v Portugal
(Stadion Miroslava Valenty)
21.06.15
Sweden v England
(Andruv stadion)
21.06.15
Italy v Portugal
(Stadion Miroslava Valenty)
24.06.15
England v Italy
(Andruv stadion)
24.06.15
Portugal v Sweden
(Stadion Miroslava Valenty)

SEMI-FINALS
27.06.15
Winner Group B v Runner-up Group A *(Andruv stadion)*
27.06.15
Winner Group A v Runner-up Group B *(Generali Arena)*

FINAL
30.06.15 *(Eden Arena)*

Passion...Sparta fans whip up a storm

capacity of 12,566.

In many ways, Sigma are a typical provincial Czech club in that they are dependent on their youth system for playing talent and revenue.

Formed in 1919, the club didn't break into the top flight until the 1980s but then established themselves as one of Czech football's major players under future national coach Karel Bruckner in the 1990s.

They were, however, at the centre of a notorious match-fixing scandal in 2010 in which their then-goalkeeper Petr Drobisz was accused of bribing players from his former club, Bohemians of Prague, to throw a league game between the two sides. Olomouc were fined 4million Czech koruna (£105,000) and docked nine points for their part in the scandal. They were also later banned from taking part in the 2012-13 Europa League, while Drobisz was cleared of any criminal activity but still served an 18-month ban.

Sigma avoided relegation and bounced back from the scandal to win the Czech Cup – their first major trophy – in 2012 but were relegated two years later.

Currently co-owned by a partnership of businessman Josef Lebr, the Olomouc city council and a not-for-profit fans group, the club is on course for an immediate return to the first division.

Stadion Miroslava Valenty

The remaining Group B games will be played at Slovacko's 8,000-capacity Stadion Miroslava Valenty. The selection of this modern, compact stadium is testament to the south Moravian club's rapid rise.

Based in Uherske Hradiste, a large but sleepy town at the heart of the Czech Republic's main wine-growing region, Slovacko came into existence only in 2000, following the merger of SK Synot Stare Mesto and FC Synot Slovacka Slavia Uherske Hradiste, two local clubs owned by the Valenta family's Synot gambling empire.

Initially known as 1.FC Synot, the merged club played in the neighbouring town of Stare Mesto until 2003, when a total reconstruction of the Uherske Hradiste stadium was completed. The future looked bright until the 2003-04 season, when the club was revealed to be at the centre of the Czech Republic's biggest-ever match-fixing scandal. In the aftermath, the club was demoted to the second division, three of its officials were convicted of bribing referees and the Valenta family sold the club, which re-emerged as Slovacko, the name of the surrounding region.

> In the 2003-04 season 1.FC Synot were revealed to be at the centre of the Czech Republic's biggest match-fixing scandal

In 2007, Slovacko changed hands again, becoming part of millionaire steel magnate Zdenek Zemek's business empire, and returned to the top flight two years later.

Despite the scandal, Synot's influence on Czech football remains strong. The stadium continues to bear the name of Miroslav Valenta, who died in 2008, and the company is also the titular sponsor of Slavia Prague's stadium and of the Czech first division, known as the Synot liga.

Come June 17, the Czech Republic will put its best face forward, welcoming visitors to a tournament played in smart stadiums in picturesque cities in an increasingly affluent country. When the guests are gone, however, the slightly murkier business of Czech football will resume. WS

Paddy Agnew reports from Rome

ITALY

From Serie D to the top flight in six years

But is it too far, too fast for minnows Carpi?

The first time that Carpi, Italy's unexpected newcomers to Serie A next season, flashed across the international media's radar it provided a moment of light relief. It happened a couple of years ago when a hapless Swedish couple opted to take a romantic holiday on the isle of Capri, off the coast of Naples.

On picking up their hire car at Milan airport, instead of typing "Capri" into the satnav the couple inserted "Carpi". And it was only when they went to the local tourist office to ask where the famous Blue Grotto (of Capri) was, that they discovered their mistake: the Blue Grotto was 600km away.

As of next season, many more people are likely to become aware of Carpi. In an Italian springtime that has been buoyed by the impressive European performances of Juventus, Fiorentina and Napoli, their story represents another positive chapter in the not-always-sunny landscape of Italian football.

In many senses, Carpi are an expression of the hardworking, industrially successful and often self-starting Emilia Romagna region in which they are based. The club is owned and administered by three men – Stefano Bonacini, Roberto Marani and Claudio Caliumi – who control "ready to wear" clothing-industry firms: Caliumi with the Madrilena brand, and Bonacini and Marani with the Gaudi brand.

Bonacini has called their team the "Ryanair of Italian football", adding that Carpi are a "low cost club who win".

In essence, the club has a turnover of €4.5milliion, of which €3m accounts for the players' wage bill. Sports director Cristiano Giuntoli, who is a former player himself in Serie C and D, points out that no one at the club earns more than €100,000 a year. Critics gleefully point out that the total Carpi wage bill would not pay half the salary of Roma midfielder Daniele De Rossi, who is reputedly the highest-paid player in the country with an annual salary of €6.5m.

Bonacini points out that his club does not even have an official team blazer, suggesting that such items come in the "not strictly necessary" category.

Giuntoli, meanwhile, underlines how the squad was put together with a bargain-basement policy that saw the arrival of key players such as Nigerian striker Jerry Mbakogu – the club's leading goalscorer this term – thanks to the collapse of his previous club, Padova.

> Carpi's entire annual wage bill wouldn't pay the salary of Roma midfielder Daniele De Rossi for half a season

Alongside Mbakogu are 22-year-old Gabriel, who was Brazil's 2012 Olympic goalkeeper and is on loan from Milan, former Slovenia under-21 defender Aljaz Struna, who is now 24 and on loan from Palermo, and three 25-year-olds in defender Riccardo Gagliolo and midfielders Lorenzo Pasciuti and Antonio Di Gaudio.

The team's captain, 31-year-old Filippo Porcari, is something of an exception in that he has actually played in Serie A before, making one appearance for Parma, in a 3-2 win over Piacenza in May 2003. Apart from that game, however, his career, like that of his team-mates, has been played exclusively in the lower ranks of Italian football.

Carpi's rise to the top has been ultra fast given that, just six years ago, they were playing in Serie D. Since then they have pulled off four promotions: first going up to Lega Pro Division 2, then Lega Pro Division 1, then Serie B two years ago ▸

Unbelievable...Carpi celebrate clinching promotion to Serie A with a goalless draw against Bari

Worry...leading scorer Mbakogu may move on

and now the pinnacle of Serie A.

The coach behind this latest promotion is 60-year-old Fabrizio Castori, a man who, like the club and its players, has spent his entire professional life in the lower divisions, coaching the likes of Grottese, Cerreto, Monturanese, Tolentino, Lanciano and many more besides.

Like his squad, Castori has been on a modest salary of around €75,000 per annum, but he is now in line for a bonus. However, it says much about expectations this term that the contractual bonus was originally written into his contract last summer with a view to being paid out in the event of the team avoiding relegation back down to the Lega Pro rather promotion to A.

All in all, for Castori and his "band of brothers", Serie A represents totally unchartered territory. It remains to be seen just how the club will approach the top flight, but Bonacini indicated to *La Gazzetta dello Sport* recently that Carpi will continue to follow the same good husbandry principles that have served it well thus far.

Asked what level of investment the club would make for next season, Bonacini said: "Right now, I can only say that we will use the same criteria and philosophy with regard to our budget. In other words, we will be taking it one step at a time."

Given the familiarity that sports director Giuntoli has with the lower ranks, it is not hard to imagine that Carpi will go looking for a mixture of promising young talent from the lower divisions and some older, experienced Serie A hands, rather than signing expensive foreigners.

However, one intriguing possibility raised by Giuntoli is that the club might consider making an offer to 38-year-old Luca Toni of Verona. The former Italy, Fiorentina, Bayern Munich and Juventus striker is currently on a salary of €1m at Verona. In the interests of one last hurrah, Carpi might hope that he might be willing to play for much less. And they are likely to be in need of reinforcements up front as Mbakogu's fine form this term may well have earned him a move elsewhere.

In the meantime, the club has a venue problem in that their own 4,500-capacity Stadio Sandro Cabassi does not meet Serie A requirements. Indeed, it doesn't even meet Serie B standards. There had been some speculation that the club might persuade local businessmen and local government in Carpi to invest in the restructuring of the Cabassi, but this idea has been seen as a non-starter since it would take too long to complete the necessary work.

So it now looks as though the team will be forced to play home games at either nearby Modena or Parma.

Modena themselves have not played in Serie A since the 2003-04 season, while liquidation-threatened Parma, who have been relegated from Serie A this season, will count themselves lucky if they manage to play in any division at all next term.

Carpi will take heart from the performances of their Emilia Romagna neighbours Sassuolo, who were promoted to Serie A for the first time two seasons ago and are hoping to stay there for a third successive campaign.

At this point, though, that looks like an extremely tall order for a Carpi team who may well have come too far, too fast. **WS**

Too small...Carpi's 4,500-capacity Stadio Sandro Cabassi is not up to Serie A standards

> "We will be taking it one step at a time"
> **Stefano Bonacini on playing in Serie A**

Co-owner...Bonacini

Backing...Carpi fans hail the "ultimate miracle" as their team head for the top flight

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Love soccer

THE 'OLD LADY' IS CENTRE STAGE ONCE MORE

Allegri's Juventus are in their first Champions League Final for 12 years

On their way...Tevez celebrates his goal in the first leg as Juventus head for a 3-2 aggregate victory over Real Madrid in the semi-finals

When newly appointed coach Massimiliano Allegri turned up at Juventus' Vinovo training centre for the first time in July last year, he was greeted by a number of fans who chose to remind him of his past allegiance to rivals Milan, telling him loud and clear that they did not want him.

With Juve having qualified for a first Champions League Final in 12 years, what do those supporters think now?

Not even his greatest admirers could have imagined Allegri ending the season in Berlin when the 47-year-old was airlifted into the Juventus job just hours after Antonio Conte resigned in the wake of three consecutive title-winning seasons. Six months earlier, after a 4-3 away defeat to minnows Sassuolo, Allegri had been sacked by Milan, who were in 11th place at the time and fully 30 points behind Conte's Juve.

When Conte quit last July, many were predicting a difficult season for the "Old Lady". It was suggested that, without their guiding light, Juventus would lose their way, especially since the new man had not been responsible for bringing a single player into his squad. However, that was to underestimate Allegri's coaching qualities, which were first seen at the top level with Cagliari, between 2008 and 2010, and then at Milan, where he won the Serie A title in his first season in 2011.

It was former Juventus and Italy coach Marcello Lippi who pointed out just how cleverly – and diplomatically – Allegri took charge. For a start, he did not change any of the many things that already worked well for the club and therefore avoided treading on famous toes.

Then, as the season progressed, he began to add some of his own concepts.

Whereas Conte's Juventus tended to be a 100 per cent "up and at em" side, Allegri's Juve is more "Italian" in that it likes to slow the pace every now and then in order to control the game. Lippi also felt that, under Allegri, the team has become more flexible, able to switch from 4-3-1-2 to 3-5-2 during the course of a game.

"[Like my Juventus] this side has grown tactically, technically and psychologically and it has got to a point of self-realisation", Lippi told Italian radio RAI 1. "To be honest, I often see myself again in him [Allegri].

"We both took over at Juventus at the same age and we both won the title at the first time of asking. We were both coaches who had coached and played at every level. We had worked our way up."

Lippi went on to praise the manner in which Allegri had taken over a winning Juve side last summer, in the immediate wake of the surprise resignation of Conte, saying: "He didn't mess about with any of the things which worked well in [Conte's] side but then, bit by bit, he got his players to acknowledge that you could add on some things so that now this side can use different tactical systems in the same game and, at international level, that is a great advantage."

Stunning return... Real Madrid old boy Morata knocks out his former club

Allegri, of course, was a fortunate man in that he inherited by far the strongest and best balanced squad in Italian football. He was even luckier on the home front as, one by one, and in manifold different ways, all his major Serie A rivals dropped out of the title race. This effectively allowed Juventus to have the league title wrapped up by the end of February, thus leaving them time and space to concentrate fully on Europe.

Throughout much of Juve's Champions League run this season, luck has appeared to be on the Old Lady's side. And that was never more obvious than in their quarter-final against Monaco, where the French side were eliminated by a debatable first-leg penalty.

Monaco's Portuguese coach Leonardo Jarim was left to comment that, whatever else, the tie had "not been decided by the quality of the players".

Many Italian commentators accepted that the dour, defensive 0-0 draw in the return leg had been a poor performance by a Juventus side that basically went looking for the scoreless draw that would see them through. Key players such as Argentinian striker Carlos Tevez, Spanish forward Alvaro Morata and Chilean midfielder Arturo Vidal had played some way below their best, leaving it to the experienced defensive line of goalkeeper Gigi Buffon and central defenders Giorgio Chiellini, Leonardo Bonucci and Andrea Barzagli to save the day.

As sports daily *Gazzetta dello Sport* put it: "Whatever way Juve's European run ends, the 'Old Lady' has become a young starlet who can show the entire Italian football movement the right way to get out of our current crisis."

The five-year long lack of Italian success in the Champions League – which has coincided with a period in which the Italian national side has twice been ignominiously eliminated from the first round of the World Cup – seemed to suggest that the game in Italy was in decline. And while Juventus' Champions League Final appearance may not mean the corner has been turned, it does represent a welcome shot in the arm.

"We are still a long way from the earnings of clubs like Real, Barcelona and Bayern, the other semi-finalists," commented *Gazzetta*. "But at least we're playing in the same league, and not just in terms of football.

"The success [of Juventus] gives the club the chance to initiate a winning cycle during which, paradoxically, even the sales of players like Pogba and Vidal could represent an opportunity."

The Tevez-Morata partnership has looked like Juve's strongest front pairing and it seems unlikely that Allegri will opt for anything else in the Final in Berlin. This means that Fernando Llorente, who has come off the bench to make a significant impact in recent Serie A and Champions League ties, will almost certainly be a substitute once again.

With Paul Pogba fit to join the familiar midfield trio of Vidal, Andrea Pirlo and Claudio Marchisio, Allegri may opt for a four-man defence which features Bonucci and Chiellini in the centre, with Stephan Lichtsteiner and Patrice Evra in the full-back berths.

Paddy Agnew

TALKING POINTS

- Berlin 2015 will be Patrice Evra's fifth Champions League Final appearance – after playing for Monaco in 2004, and Manchester United in 2008, 2009 and 2011.

- Andrea Pirlo (above) hinted before the semi-final against Real Madrid that if Juventus win the Champions League it could be the perfect moment for him to either retire or leave the club.

- Real Madrid have an option to re-sign Alvaro Morata from Juventus for a fee of €30million. Juve paid Madrid €20m to sign the player who scored in both legs of the semi-final.

A BRAND NEW WAY OF PLAYING

Luis Enrique has made Barcelona a tougher, more versatile side

It's two years since Barcelona were hammered 7-0 on aggregate by Bayern Munich in the Champions League semi-final, a defeat that for many called into question the future of *tiki-taka*. It's four months since Lionel Messi was left out of a defeat to Real Sociedad and missed training with a gastric problem that was interpreted as an expression of his discontent with coach Luis Enrique. With rumblings over the probity of the Neymar deal, a transfer ban and questions about how ethical some of Barcelona's commercial links were, they were a hair's breadth from being a club in crisis. Now they are in the Champions League Final.

The background issues haven't gone away – the transfer ban stands and Barca's president Josep Maria Bartomeu and former president Sandro Rosell will face tax evasion charges over the Neymar issue – but on the pitch everything has clicked.

The front three of Lionel Messi, Neymar and Luis Suarez had the potential for greatness, even if many feared they wouldn't dovetail, and now it is delivering. Winning quickly transforms off-field problems into minor irritations.

The dynamic of the team has changed considerably from the 2013 semi-final, even though only three outfielders have been replaced. Out have gone Xavi, Alexis Sanchez and Pedro, and in have come Ivan Rakitic, Neymar and Suarez.

Xavi was a superb footballer and perhaps more than anybody embodied the philosophy of the Guardiola-era Barcelona, spinning his webs of passes, turning the 10-yard, space-creating sideways ball into an art form. But as age crept up on him – he is now 35 – a little of the intensity left him and for a couple of seasons he hasn't pressed with quite the same zeal he once had.

Xavi has accepted his relegation to the bench with good grace – rather better grace than now coach Enrique accepted the end of his time as first-team regular and emblem of the club under Frank Rijkaard – and the introduction of Rakitic has changed Barca's midfield.

Rakitic is quicker, taller, more aggressive and, crucially, far more likely to attempt a direct forward pass even if it increases the chances of possession being lost. His assist for Messi's second goal in the first leg of the semi-final was typical – a rapid, vertical pass from halfway to just outside the box. There were four Bayern players who got within four or five feet of the ball, but the risk was justified by the fact that it presented Messi with the ball in enough space that he had already begun to accelerate when he came up against the backpedalling Jerome Boateng.

But Rakitic's verticality isn't the only change in style; the stellar nature of the front three is the major alteration. It would be untrue to say Barca are a broken team in the way the term was understood in, say, Italy in the 1990s, but there is far more of a sense now of them looking to get the ball to the front three and letting them get on with it.

That was presumably one of the reasons Johan Cruyff was so sceptical of Neymar's signing. He doubted a player who was being paid as much as he was at such an early age would confirm to the tactical demands Barca have traditionally placed on their forwards. To an extent, he was right: Neymar does not work the flank as Pedro or Sanchez did.

But between them, Barca's front three win the ball back – through tackles and interceptions – an average of 3.2 times per game; in Guardiola's last season, the front three won it back 5.0 per game. Barca don't press as hard or as high as they used to.

What they do far more often than they used to is to run with the ball. In the first leg of the semi-final, Barca attempted 44 dribbles and completed 26; to put that in context, in the first leg of the Juventus v Real Madrid semi-final there were only 15 completed dribbles in total. Where Barca once passed teams to death wearing them down with the attrition of having constantly to chase possession, there are now three individuals all capable of doing something extraordinary that will produce a goal.

Dribbling is risky, of course. In the first leg of that semi-final, Barcelona lost the ball 18 times while dribbling – the sort of profligacy they could never have countenanced under Guardiola. But this is the new Barcelona. They may not be avatars of a possession-based philosophy as Guardiola's side was – although he bridles still at the term "*tiki-taka*" and insists that possession must always have a purpose – but that gives them a wildness, a sense of unpredictability.

Whether that is considered a step forwards or backwards probably depends on individual temperament, but what is certainly true is that the team looks rejuvenated. In that final season under Guardiola and under both Tito Vilanova and Gerardo Martino, Barca have looked jaded, physically and mentally incapable of the intensity of pressing that was such a key feature under Guardiola. This season, they've found a way of playing without needing to press in the same way, and the major overhaul of personnel that had seemed necessary is suddenly less of a priority.

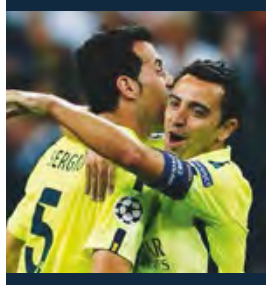
Perhaps the arrival of Neymar and Suarez has cost Barca some of their identity, and has changed the style away from what Cruyff and Guardiola would see as the classical Barca model. But so long as it is working, few at the Camp Nou will care.

There is an edge to Barcelona now, a hardness that was perhaps lacking, and a versatility that makes it so much harder for teams to set up to stop them. It may be that moving away from the pure Barca model – hugely successful as that was – has made them more effective.

Jonathan Wilson

TALKING POINTS

- If Xavi (below right), who will leave Barcelona this summer, appears in the Final, it will be a record-breaking 151st Champions League appearance.



- Barcelona and Juventus have never met before in a European final. Xavi is the only Barcelona player remaining from their 2003 Champions League quarter-final tie against Juventus.
- Twenty-five of Barcelona's 28 Champions League goals this season have come from Luis Suarez, Neymar or Lionel Messi.

Direct...Rakitic battling against Bayern Munich

Front three...(from left) Suarez, Neymar and Messi

Football's most WANTED

This summer's transfer market will be missing at least one major player. Barcelona's global transfer ban, for breaching FIFA regulations on the signing of under-18s, runs until 2016, ruling them out of action.

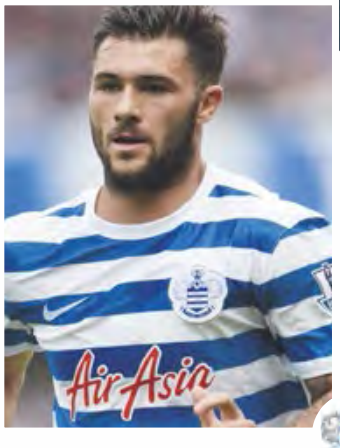
Barcelona were responsible for the biggest deal of last year – the £75million signing of Luis Suarez from Liverpool – but will be onlookers this summer.

Real and Atletico Madrid have both denied that they could receive transfer bans for similar offences. But such a scenario may explain why Real announced a £25m deal with Porto for Danilo in April, three months before the market opened.

In the meantime, both Madrid clubs are preparing to be participants in some of this summer's major transfers. Manchester United will join them, having already concluded an agreement for Dutch winger Memphis Depay, from PSV.

The biggest deal of the summer is likely to be for France midfielder Paul Pogba. Juventus are braced for an offer – from Real Madrid, Paris Saint-Germain, Chelsea and Manchester City. Any transfer will have ramifications across Europe.

Here are 36 players set to move this summer...

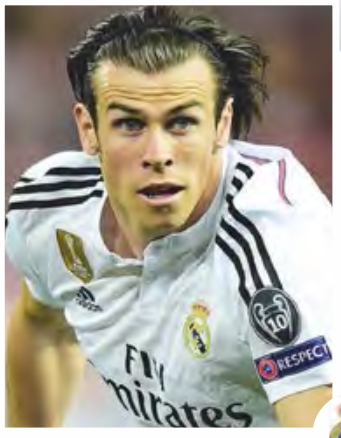


Charlie AUSTIN

Among the Premier League's top scorers despite playing for relegated QPR. Will not be short of offers from mid-ranking Premier League clubs

Andre AYEW

Set to leave France, with Marseille saying they cannot match the wages on offer from English clubs. Roma are also keen.

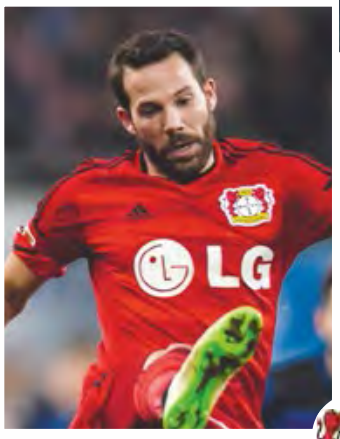


Gareth BALE

Real Madrid's world-record signing has endured a difficult second season. There would be no shortage of offers from England if Florentino Perez trades in his trophy signing.

Christian BENTEKE

Re-booted and firing again for Aston Villa after serious injury ruled him out of last summer's World Cup. Liverpool and Manchester United are among the suitors.



Gonzalo CASTRO

The speculation in Germany is that the versatile, long-serving Bayer Leverkusen midfielder could switch to Bayern Munich or Atletico Madrid this summer.

Edinson CAVANI

The Uruguayan forward is unhappy at Paris Saint-Germain after falling out with coach Laurent Blanc. Premier League or a return to Italy is on the cards.

Petr CECH

The veteran keeper is fed up of playing second fiddle to Thibaut Courtois at Chelsea. There will be plenty of offers, starting with Arsenal and Galatasaray.

Kevin DE BRUYNE

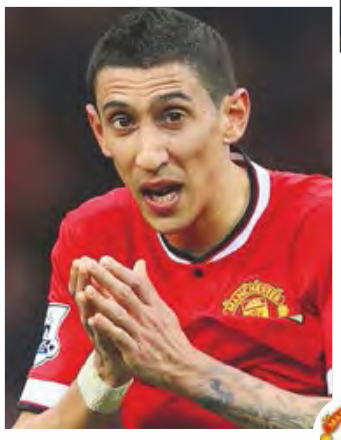
His agent, Patrick De Koster, claims a host of big names have inquired about his client. Wolfsburg insist they will not sell, but offers of €80m could tempt them.

David DE GEA

Contracted to Manchester United until 2016 and yet to agree a new contract despite an exceptional season at Old Trafford. Coveted by Real Madrid, his hometown club.

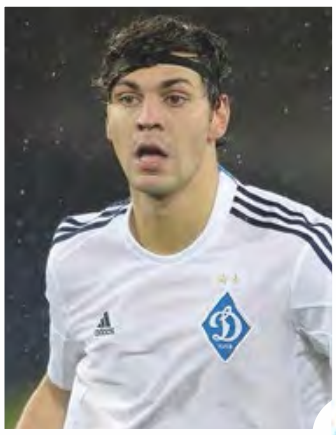
Memphis DEPAY

The first major signing of the summer 2015 market, signed by Manchester United from PSV for £25m. Winger who was given his international debut by Louis Van Gaal.



Angel DI MARIA

After an unhappy season on and off the pitch in England, the Argentina winger is keen to leave. Can Manchester United find a buyer and cut their losses?



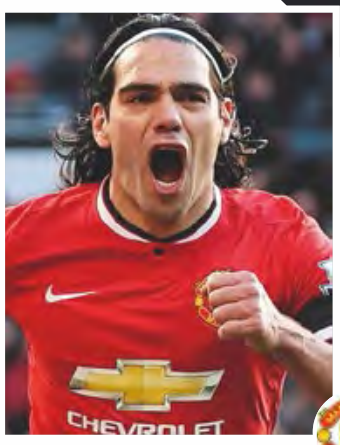
Aleksandar DRAGOVIC

The Austrian centre-back fits the bill for many clubs seeking high-class defensive reinforcements. Arsenal are said to be leading the chase for the Dynamo Kiev man.

2015 SUMMER TRANSFERS

Paulo DYBALA

The Argentina striker has been one of the stars of Serie A. Palermo have a hefty release clause (£30m) but that may not deter serious buyers, led by Juventus.



Radamel FALCAO

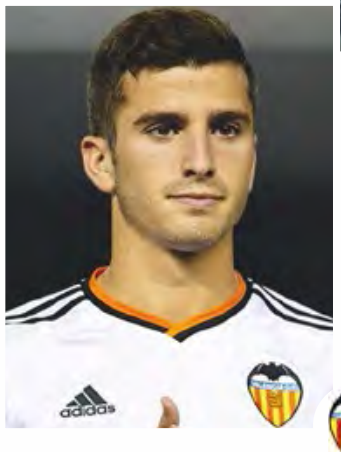
After a miserable season on loan at Manchester United from Monaco, the Colombia striker is keen to move on – if another club is prepared to take on his wages.

FELIPE ANDERSON

The goal-scoring midfielder recently signed a new deal with Lazio but reports in Italy and Germany suggest Bayern Munich are planning a sign-and-loan back deal.

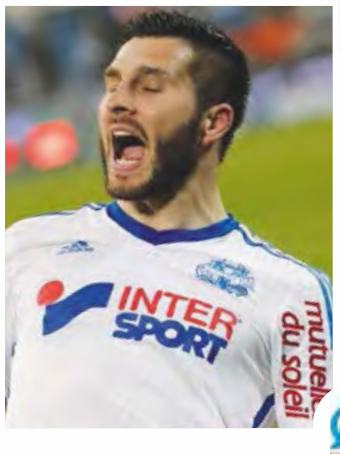
Roberto FIRMINO

The recently capped Brazil striker has a contract with Hoffenheim until 2017, but that may not deter the number of Premier League clubs who are tracking him.



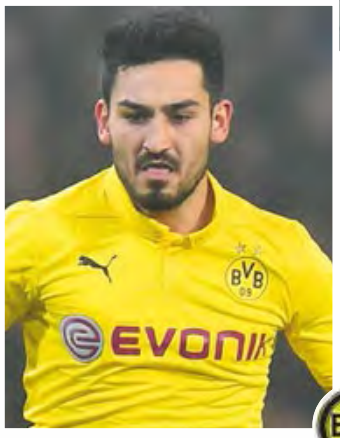
Jose GAYA

The young left-back has thrived at Valencia this season. Real Madrid are keen but will have to pay the €50m buyout clause in his new contract.



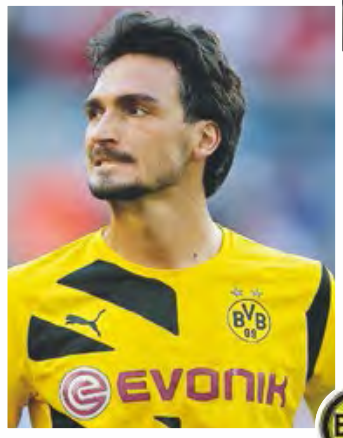
Andre-Pierre GIGNAC

Out of contract and set to leave Marseille this summer, the French international striker is being closely monitored by a number of English and Italian clubs.



Ilkay GUNDOGAN

The exciting but injury-prone midfielder is keen to leave post-Klopp Borussia Dortmund. Arsenal and Atletico Madrid are among those leading the chase.



Mats HUMMELS

It could be all change in Dortmund this summer, with captain and defensive stalwart Hummels set to leave. Manchester United are first in the queue.

Mauro ICARDI

Contract talks with Intermazionale have stalled, so the former Barcelona trainee could seek his fortune elsewhere, with top English clubs expressing interest.

Danny INGS

The England under-21 striker was always likely to leave on a free transfer this summer; Burnley's relegation has ensured that. Maybe tempted by a move to Spain.

Ngolo KANTE

English, French and German clubs are all reported to be monitoring Caen's highly rated central midfielder. The Ligue 1 club are unlikely to stand in his way.

Alexandre LACAZETTE

Top scorer in Ligue 1 this season and coveted by a number of English clubs. Lyon insist he is not for sale but an offer north of €20m may force their hand.

Hugo LLORIS

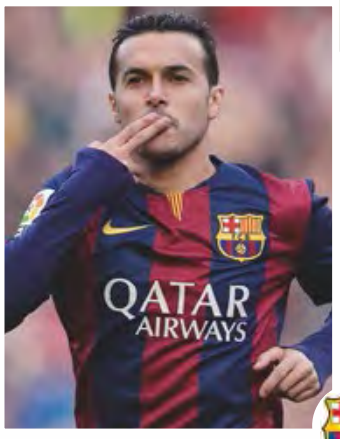
Champions League football is the ambition for Tottenham Hotspur's keeper ahead of Euro 2016. Linked with PSG and (if they sell De Gea) Manchester United.

Jackson MARTINEZ

The Colombian forward has enjoyed another good season in Portugal. Could be the latest to be sold on by transfer-market wheeler-dealers Porto.

Jose MAURI

The highly rated Argentina-born teenager is set to move on after Parma's relegation. Chelsea have been linked but the classy midfielder won't be short of other offers.



PEDRO

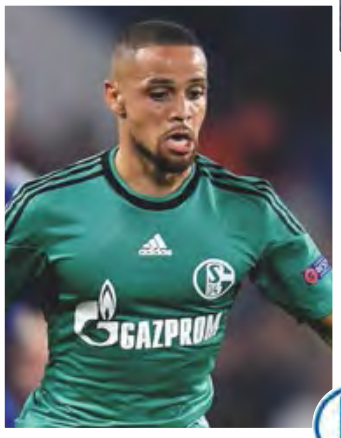
The winger has become an increasingly marginal figure at Barcelona this season. Still only 27, he is keen to move although Barca's transfer ban may complicate matters.

Paul POGBA

The France midfielder is the planet's most coveted player. Former club Manchester United lead the chase, followed by Real Madrid, PSG, Manchester City and Chelsea.

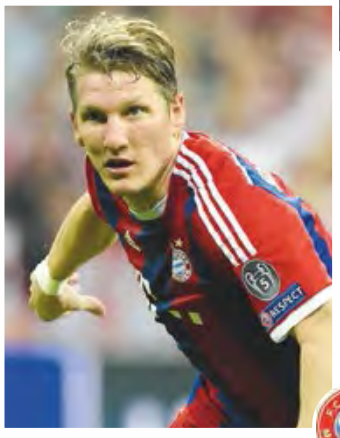
Dennis PRAET

After winning three successive league titles with Anderlecht, the young midfielder is ready to leave Belgium for the bright lights of England or Spain.



Sidney SAM

The Germany winger was sacked by Schalke one year into a four-year deal. Given his recent form, Bundesliga clubs may pass on him, leaving a move abroad most likely.



Bastian SCHWEINSTEIGER

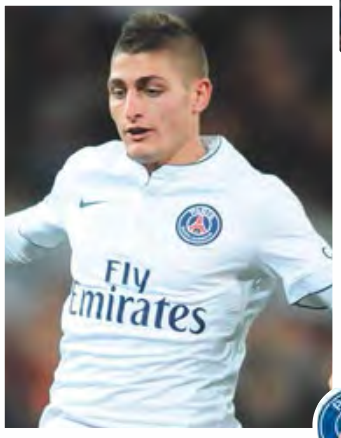
After a series of injuries, his stock is not what it was at Bayern Munich, so he could be tempted to head for the Premier League. Asking price? Around €20m.

Yaya TOURE

The 32-year-old is set to quit Manchester City after a poor season by his standards. Internazionale are favourites, but City might offer him to Juventus as bait for Pogba.

Raphael VARANE

With Pepe due to sign a new contract at Real Madrid, Varane is worried about losing his place in the France side. Chelsea boss Jose Mourinho is a big fan.



Marco VERRATTI

The Paris Saint-Germain midfielder has been linked with Real Madrid, particularly if his compatriot Carlo Ancelotti stays in Madrid, as well as a return to Italy.

Georginio WIJNALDUM

The PSV captain and central midfielder is tipped to follow team-mate Memphis Depay out the door. A step up to England or Germany is most likely.

After a fantastic first season at Arsenal, culminating in an FA Cup Final appearance,

Timeline

FEB 12, 2005 — Makes his professional debut as a 16-year-old for Cobreloa in a 5-4 win at home to Temuco.

APR 21, 2006 — Signs for Italian side Udinese but is immediately loaned out to Colo Colo in Chile.

APR 27, 2006 — Makes his international debut for Chile, at 17, as a 58th-minute sub in a 1-0 friendly win against New Zealand.

DEC 13, 2006 — Colo Colo reach the semi-finals of the Sudamericana Cup, but after drawing in the away leg they lose 2-1 at home to Pachuca.

JAN 28, 2007 — Sent off for Chile against Paraguay in the South American Under-20 Championship in Peru.

Carrying the hopes of a nation

the Chilean will spearhead the host's hopes of success at this summer's Copa America

WORDS: Tim Vickery

Scores his first goals in the Libertadores Cup in style, netting a hat-trick in a 4-0 win away to Caracas of Venezuela.

MAR 20, 2007

Part of the Chile squad that finishes third in the Under-20 World Cup in Canada.

JUL 22, 2007

Scores his first goal for River Plate, in his second game for the club on loan from Udinese, in a 4-2 win at home to Estudiantes.

AUG 29, 2007

Scores his first international goal for Chile in a 2-1 friendly loss to Switzerland.

SEP 7, 2007

Makes his long-awaited Serie A debut as a substitute for Udinese in a 1-0 defeat to Juventus.

SEP 14, 2008

Whether Arsenal's 2014-15 campaign will be judged a success may depend on whether they retain the FA Cup in the Final against Aston Villa on May 30. But regardless of the outcome at Wembley, Alexis Sanchez's first season in English football has been an overwhelming triumph.

With an admirable work rate to back up an impressive array of skills, the Chilean was one of six players nominated for this year's PFA Players' Player of the Year – something which came as no surprise to his manager, Arsene Wenger.

"Alexis is loved by everybody," says the Arsenal boss. "He is very friendly and bubbly every day.

"He is dynamic and does both parts of the game. He wins you the ball back quickly, so the transitions are very good from defence to attack and from attack to defence."

In full flight...Sanchez hurdles Javi Martinez of Spain

"Alexis is our sensation. He has what it takes to be a world-class player"

Chile's Mark Gonzalez on Sanchez in 2010

Ecstatic...a goal against Australia at Brazil 2014

However, the season doesn't end in north London at the end of May for the 26-year-old. Next up is the little matter of carrying his country's hopes as the Copa America kicks off on home soil in June.

Remarkably, Chile have never won the Copa in its 99-year history, although they have finished runners-up four times. By popular consensus, the current team is the best in the nation's history. And with Sanchez their standout player, the pressure is on. Great powers bring with them great responsibilities, and he will be expected to deliver.

Yet that has been the situation for much of the striker's career, ever since proving himself the outstanding player in the 2007 South American Under-20 Championship.

Profiled in that April's issue of *World Soccer*, the poor kid from the dusty streets of Tocapilla, in the north of the country, was already a celebrity. "I used to tell him not to play football in the street because he would break windows and I had to put up with the neighbours complaining," recalled his mother, Martina. "Now people say to me, 'do you remember when Alexis broke my window?'"

He was also breaking records as a teenager, playing in the first division for Cobreloa when he was only just 16; being selected for the senior national side at the age of 17; forming part of a sensational attacking line-up with Santiago giants Colo Colo; and winning the domestic title and reaching the Final of the Sudamericana Cup.

Fame...a street in his home town Tocapilla

The range of his youthful talent was quite breathtaking. He combined wonderful, tight dribbling skills with pace, acceleration and strength on the ball. He had the capacity to see a pass and the ability to get into the box to score goals, plus the talent to whip in free-kicks from the edge of the penalty area.

At Colo Colo he clicked naturally with Mati Fernandez and Humberto Suazo, and that ability to quickly form an understanding with his team-mates has

JUN 28, 2010 – Despair at Ellis Park, Johannesburg, as Chile lose 3-0 to Brazil in the round of 16 at the World Cup.

FEB 27, 2011 – Scores four goals as Udinese beat Palermo 7-0 in Serie A.

JUL 17, 2011 – Dejection as Chile are knocked out of the Copa America, in Argentina, at the quarter-final stage by Venezuela in a penalty shoot-out.

AUG 14, 2011 – Makes his Barcelona debut in the first leg of the Spanish Super Cup away to Real Madrid.

AUG 26, 2011 – Appears as a second-half substitute as Barcelona beat Porto 2-0 to win the UEFA Super Cup.

AUG 29, 2011 – Scores his first goal for Barcelona, on the opening day of the Liga season, in a 5-0 win against Villarreal.

followed him throughout his career. On loan in Argentina with River Plate, he established a fine understanding with Radamel Falcao, before joining Udinese in Italy and doing the same thing with Antonio Di Natale.

With the national team he was lucky enough to come of age just as Argentinian coach Marcelo Bielsa took charge of Chile and it was a marriage made in heaven.

Working with and moulding a group of youngsters who had just reached the semi-finals of the 2007 World Under-20 Cup, Bielsa gave Chile what the team had always lacked – an identity, based on intense pressing and bold wing play.

Sanchez was perfect for the new regime and his first international goal came in Bielsa's debut game, against Switzerland in September 2007. Although injury kept him out of the first few rounds of 2010 World Cup qualification, the team rallied round him on his return. Without Sanchez, Chile won one and lost two of their opening four games. In the remaining 14, they won nine and drew two in swashbuckling style to make it through to their first World Cup finals since 1998.

In the build up to the tournament in South Africa, Chile's Mark Gonzalez made the identity of his side's star attraction very clear. "Alexis is our sensation," said Gonzalez. "He has what it takes to be a world-class player. When he has a bit more experience and is well focused, playing for the team, he's going to be a worldwide star.

"Very few have his ability, and his physique is similar to that of Cristiano Ronaldo, although Alexis is smaller."

It was an astute analysis, as Gonzalez

Goal threat...playing for Colo Colo against Mexico's Toluca in the Sudamericana Cup

FROM THE ARCHIVES

NEW WORLD SOCCER MORE PAGES, NEW FEATURES, EXTRA COMMENT
World Soccer
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The Barca loner
RONALDINHO EXCLUSIVE
"I'm a football[illegible] an actor"
PLUS – Thierry Henry Pele in 1970 Michel Platini
[illegible]n your way, Jose! 6 candidates to replace Mourinho at Chelsea
Beckham uncovered Football revolutionary or Hollywood playboy?
unicef

World Soccer vintage 8 years ago

In April 2007, *World Soccer* identified Sanchez as a rising star, describing the slightly-built teenager as a "dazzling natural talent".

The article went on: "The youngster may currently struggle to last 90 minutes, but he is stronger on the ball than his frame would indicate. He has terrific tight-space skills, is full of tricks in one-on-one situations and has the courage to use them where they are most effective."

Having joined Udinese for £2million but then loaned to Colo Colo, it was suggested that year's Libertadores Cup would see "more responsibility fall upon Sanchez's slender shoulders" but felt "he is unlikely to be overawed".

It added: "Sanchez looks ready for any challenge the game in his native continent can throw at him in 2007. Whatever happens, it will be invaluable experience on the road to Serie A."

TALENT SCOUT

Alexis SANCHEZ CHILE
Under-20s star en route to Udinese

Stefan BABOVIC SERBIA
Attacking midfielder is nation's bright new hope

Krisztian NEMETH HUNGARY
Teenage striker following great tradition

Star in the making...the young Sanchez was featured as one to watch by *World Soccer* in April 2007

Carried off in the league match away to Real Sociedad and out of action for nearly two months.

SEP 10, 2011

Appears in the Club World Cup semi-final win over Al Sadd as a sub but is injured and misses the Final against Santos.

DEC 15, 2011

Barcelona beat Athletic Bilbao 3-0 to win the Spanish Cup Final.

MAY 25, 2012

Celebrates La Liga title without playing as Barcelona are crowned champions following Real Madrid's 1-1 draw with Espanyol.

MAY 13, 2013

had picked up on the fact that his team-mate was starting to fill out. The once skinny little kid was turning into a pocket battleship. He also alluded to the argument that Sanchez was almost suffering from an excess of options. At heart, he was an instinctive player who could do so many things that it was not always easy to choose the one that was in the best interests of the team.

This became something of a problem when Sanchez joined Barcelona in 2011. His three seasons with Udinese had been highly promising – in the last of them, with the Sanchez-Di Natale partnership running riot, the club finished fourth in Serie A. But while there was plenty of silverware at Camp Nou over the next three years, the Chilean hardly fulfilled the expectations of Gonzalez.

Sanchez had accumulated some frustrations, and in a typical interview given in April 2013, he explained: "When you come to Barcelona you have to learn how to play football all over again, and that's what I'm trying to do." He admitted: "I should get rid of the ball a bit quicker and go forward past the full-back when I'm left one against one." But there was also more than a hint of a complaint when he added:

La Liga...playing for Barcelona against Levante

> "He wins you the ball back quickly, so the transitions are very good from defence to attack and from attack to defence"
>
> **Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger on his all-action striker**

"On the wing, I have to stay waiting for the ball to come, but in the centre I can appear more and participate in more of the moves."

There was, of course, an obvious problem – one identified by Wenger. "It's not easy in a team where you have such a dominant figure as Messi," the Arsenal manager pointed out. "The game naturally goes through the strong point, so in Barcelona the game goes through Messi. It means the other players become a bit more peripheral."

By then, Wenger had brought Sanchez to London and given him what he badly needed: a prominent role in a big European club. The Premier League had always looked a likely destination – a few months before even joining Barcelona Sanchez had said that English football was his favourite "because they go at 100 miles an hour and don't stop". And nor does Sanchez. But is there a danger that his non-stop endeavour could leave him exhausted this summer when it comes to the Copa?

It is a question that has been pondered by Chile coach, and Bielsa disciple, Jorge Sampaoli. "I've always liked Alexis as a winger," said Sampaoli in September last year. "But there's a danger that he'll tire himself out chasing after the opposing full-backs.

"You have to protect him, allow him to move across the attacking line, give him more freedom instead of structuring him too much."

While Barcelona were clearly guilty of this latter offence, maybe Arsenal have been encouraging him to run backwards excessively. Chile, meanwhile, must hope that they can get the best out of their star striker where he can do the most damage: in and around the opposing penalty box.

He has already made history with the national side, contributing to performances in 2010 and 2014 that – with the exception of 1962, when they hosted the tournament and came third – are Chile's best in a World Cup. In both South Africa and Brazil they qualified from their group and won plenty of admirers for the style of their play, before falling to Brazil each time in the round of 16..

While they were comprehensively beaten in 2010, four years later they were considerably better, and ended Spain's reign as world champions before falling to the hosts on penalties after a game they came agonisingly close to winning. But Sanchez – who had scored their goal in a 1-1 draw – ended the tournament on a terrible note, having his spot-kick saved by Julio Cesar in the shoot-out.

The next time he kicks a competitive ball for his country it should be in the Copa America opener against Ecuador on June 11, when he will be aiming to be part of a Chile side that at last wins a major title. Three years ago he commented that

Miss...having his penalty saved against Brazil

"Chilean players are very good, but we lack a strong mentality". It is not a problem that would seem to apply to Sanchez himself. "He feels he can defy the medical people," said Wenger in February, when Sanchez was forced to miss a few games for Arsenal. "He's so keen to play that he thinks he can get over strains."

Worried his player was getting close to running on empty, Wenger added: "You can see that when he plays, but he can dig deep."

Wearing the shirt of "*La Roja*" this summer, he will be well and truly in the red zone. And providing he is fit enough to sparkle, expect the warning lights to be flashing in opposing defences. **WS**

Strike twins...with Di Natale at Udinese

Scores his first hat-trick for Barcelona in a 4-0 win at home to Elche.

JAN 5, 2014

Sees his penalty saved in a shoot-out as Brazil knock Chile out of the World Cup.

JUN 28, 2014

After signing for Arsenal, he is a winner in the Community Shield against Manchester City at Wembley.

AUG 10, 2014

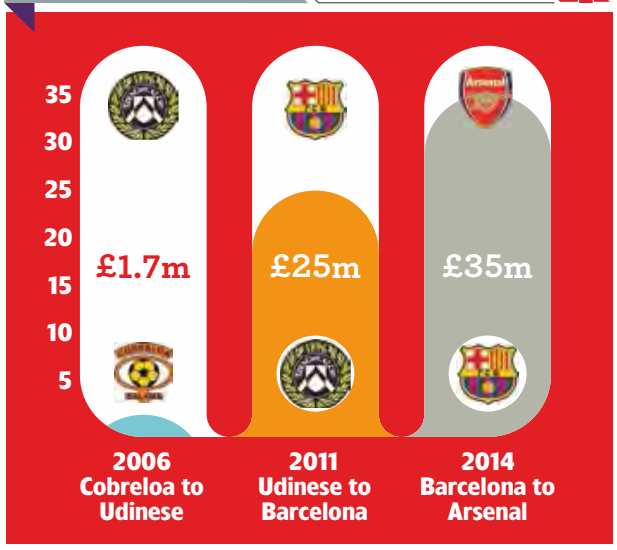
Scores both goals in the FA Cup semi-final as Arsenal beat Reading 2-1 to reach the Final against Aston Villa.

APR 18, 2015

Alexis Sanchez

the numbers game

TRANSFER FEES



YOUNGEST

YEARS		MONTHS		DAYS		
1	7	0	4	0	0	8

The age at which he became the youngest player to ever represent Chile.

MINUTES

CHILE

77

CAPS

GOALS

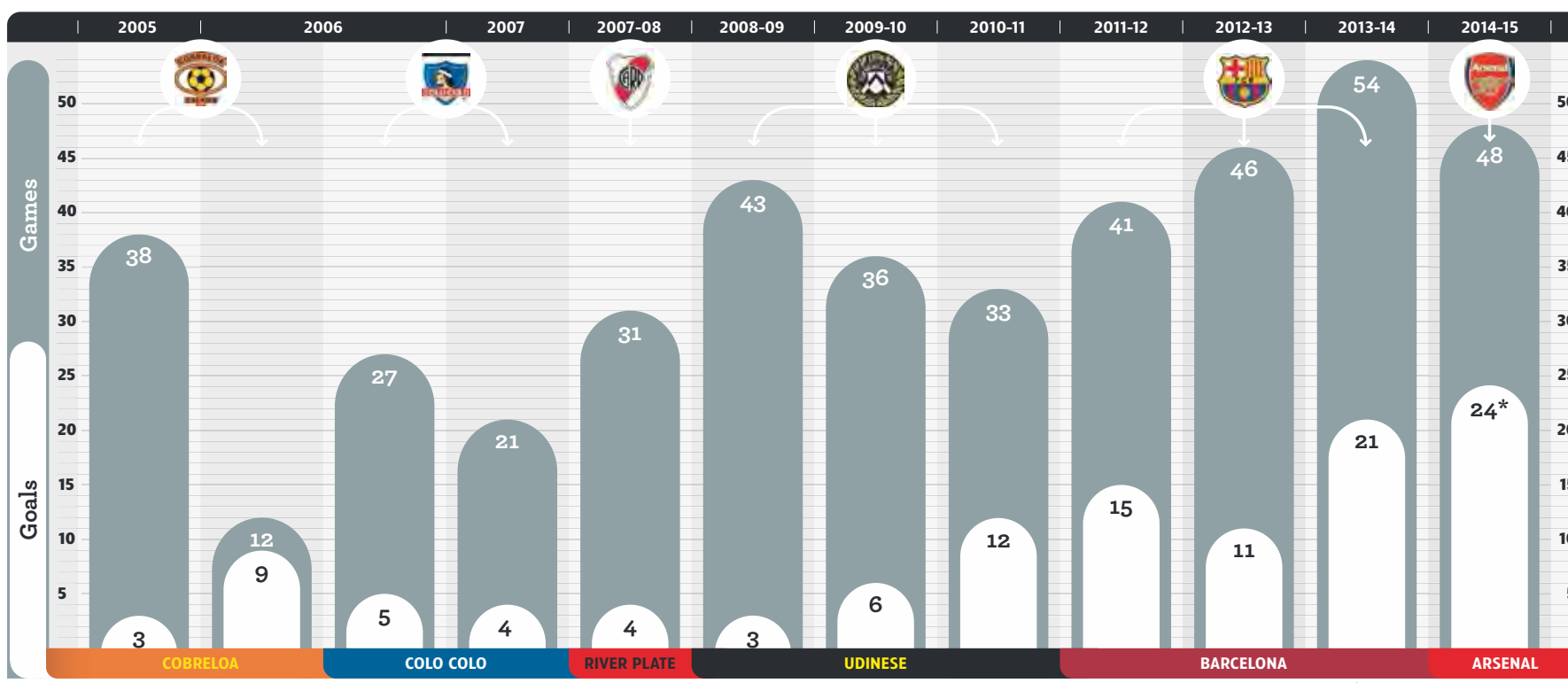
26

BEST XI

PFA team of the year 2014-15

HONOURS

COLO COLO		
Chilean Primera	2006 clausura	2007 apertura
RIVER PLATE		
Argentinian Primera	2008 clausura	
BARCELONA		
Spanish league	2013	
Spanish Cup	2012	
Spanish Super Cup	2011	2013
UEFA Super Cup	2011	
Club World Cup	2011	
ARSENAL		
Community Shield	2014	



(*up to & including 16.05.15)

WHO WILL BE CROWNED CHAMPIONS OF THE CONTINENT?

COPA AMÉRICA Chile2015

GROUP A

CHILE
MÉXICO
ECUADOR
BOLIVIA

			KO (BST)
12/6	Chile	vs. Equador	00:30
13/6	Mexico	vs. Bolivia	00:30
15/6	Ecuador	vs. Bolivia	22:00
16/6	Chile	vs. Mexico	00:30
19/6	Mexico	vs. Equador	22:00
20/6	Chile	vs. Bolivia	00:30

GROUP B

ARGENTINA
URUGUAY
PARAGUAY
JAMAICA

			KO (BST)
13/6	Uruguay	vs. Jamaica	20:00
13/6	Argentina	vs. Paraguay	22:30
16/6	Paraguay	vs. Jamaica	22:00
17/6	Argentina	vs. Uruguay	00:30
20/6	Uruguay	vs. Paraguay	20:00
20/6	Argentina	vs. Jamaica	22:30

GROUP C

BRASIL
COLOMBIA
PERÚ
VENEZUELA

			KO (BST)
14/6	Colombia	vs. Venezuela	20:00
14/6	Brasil	vs. Peru	22:30
18/6	Brasil	vs. Colombia	01:00
19/6	Peru	vs. Venezuela	00:30
21/6	Colombia	vs. Peru	20:00
21/6	Brasil	vs. Venezuela	22:30

KNOCK-OUT STAGES

			KO (BST)
Q-Final 1	25/6	*Win. Gr.A* vs. *Best 3rd from Gr. B/C*	00:30
Q-Final 2	26/6	*2nd Gr. A* vs. *2nd Gr. C*	00:30
Q-Final 3	27/6	*Win. Gr. B* vs. *Best 3rd from Gr. A/C*	00:30
Q-Final 4	27/6	*Win. Gr. C* vs. *2nd Gr. B*	22:30
S-Final 1	30/6	*Win. QF 1* vs. *Win. QF 2*	00:30
S-Final 2	01/7	*Win. QF 3* vs. *Win. QF 4*	00:30
3/4 Playoff	04/7	*Loser SF 1* vs. *Loser SF 2*	00:30
Final	04/7	*Win. SF 1* vs. *Win. SF 2*	21:00

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Copa stars...(from top, left to right) James Rodriguez (Colombia), Neymar (Brazil), Alexis Sanchez (Chile), Edinson Cavani (Uruguay), Enner Valencia (Ecuador) and Lionel Messi (Argentina)

2015 COPA AMERICA

16 PAGE SPECIAL

As the showpiece tournament prepares for its big kick-off in Chile, we highlight the teams, the stars and the coaches aiming to be kings of South America

WORDS: Tim Vickery. **ADDITIONAL REPORTING:** Martin Del Palacio Langer (Mexico) and Nathan Carr (Jamaica)

Ninety-nine years ago the birth of the Copa America, the sport's oldest continental competition, brought about a rapid change to the game of football.

Held almost annually in the early years, the tournament fostered a dramatic rise in the standards of South American sides – made evident when Uruguay arrived unheralded at the 1924 Olympic Games in Paris and walked off with the gold medal. They enchanted observers with the beauty of their play and led to a question being asked: how can we find out which really is the best team around, given that professionals cannot enter the Olympics?

The answer, of course, was the creation of the World Cup – first staged, and won, by Uruguay, just 14 years after they had claimed the inaugural Copa.

Since then, the Copa has been through a number of phases, at times playing host to the best football in the world, at others neglected. It was brought back in 1987, and taken round all of South America's 10 footballing nations, but it found itself overshadowed by another significant development in South American football – the introduction, in 1996, of the marathon format of World Cup qualification, where all 10 nations play each other home and away, a change which has done wonders for the standard of the less traditional nations.

For a few years the Copa seemed superfluous, and between 1997 and 2004 four versions were played, all with plenty of understrength teams. Since then, though, the Copa has found its place in the calendar.

The year after the World Cup is the silly season for South American sides, as all they do is play friendlies, with priority given to lucrative trips to the Far East or to matches staged in the USA. The Copa, however, brings all that to an end. It kicks

off the next cycle of competitive matches in Chile, on June 11, and then from October onwards embraces 18 rounds of World Cup qualification, culminating in Russia 2018.

This means that today's Copa is a little bit different from other continental competitions. For example, it has no qualifiers – indeed, since 1993 two teams from outside the continent have been invited to make up the field. Usually they are from the CONCACAF region, and this year Mexico and debutants Jamaica will take part.

It is also fair to say that the Copa, rather than marking the end of a process, heralds the beginning of a new one. This year, of the 10 South American sides, only three have retained their coaches from the previous cycle. In the case of the other seven, the tournament will provide the first competitive matches for the man in charge – although Dunga is returning to the post he previously held with Brazil from 2006 to 2010. Of the new coaches, a few of them have only been in their current jobs since March, so it would clearly be unfair to judge their teams as the finished article. Their work is only just beginning and this is the first time they will have spent a prolonged period with their players.

Once the ball is rolling, of course, everyone will want to win the competition, but it is undeniable that for almost everyone the priority is preparing a team for the World Cup qualifiers.

The exception are the hosts. There is always pressure on the home team to lift the trophy in front of their own fans – and that falls with special intensity on Chile this year.

The Chileans have taken part in the competition right from that inaugural tournament in 1916, but they have never won the Copa. For this reason they are on a different cycle, with coach Jorge Sampaoli's contract drawn up to end with this tournament. So, while others may be taking tentative steps towards World Cup qualification, Chile have been explicitly building towards the Copa.

If they win, they make history; if they lose, they still gain an investment in stadiums – another recent priority of the Copa America. In a continent where most countries are highly centralised, recent Copas have tried to spread the game.

In keeping with this spirit, this will be the most decentralised competition Chile has ever staged. Of the six previous Copas hosted, the first five were all played in a single stadium: in Vina del Mar in 1920, and in Santiago in 1926, 1941, 1945 and 1955. In 1962 the World Cup was restricted to four cities – Santiago and nearby Vina and Rancagua, as well as Arica in the north – although in part this was a consequence of an earthquake that devastated the country two years earlier and made it impossible to stage matches in the south. The 1991 Copa did go south, to Concepcion for a couple of games, and used the neighbouring seaside towns of Vina and Valparaiso as well as Santiago.

But this year's competition dwarfs all of that, using a total of nine stadiums in eight different cities. Santiago, obviously, is the base, along with the nearby cluster of Vina, Valparaiso and Rancagua. And the action also goes up north to La Serena and Antofagasta, and south to Concepcion and Temuco – both stage a quarter-final and the former has a semi-final and the third-place play-off as well.

Some of these remodelled stadiums have been rushing to be ready in time, but all should be providing good service to Chilean football long after the 2015 Copa America has entered the history books. **WS**

> "It will be very difficult but we are going to try to make it a great Copa America for Chile"
>
> Chile coach Jorge Sampaoli

Backing...Chile fans dream of seeing their team reign on home soil

2015 COPA AMERICA MATCH SCHEDULE

GROUP A

Jun 11
Chile v Ecuador
Santiago
Jun 12
Mexico v Bolivia
Vina del Mar
Jun 15
Ecuador v Bolivia
Valparaiso
Chile v Mexico
Santiago
Jun 19
Mexico v Ecuador
Rancagua
Chile v Bolivia
Santiago

GROUP B

Jun 13
Uruguay v Jamaica
Antofagasta
Argentina v Paraguay
La Serena
Jun 16
Paraguay v Jamaica
Antofagasta
Argentina v Uruguay
La Serena
Jun 20
Uruguay v Paraguay
La Serena
Argentina v Jamaica
Vina del Mar

GROUP C

Jun 14
Colombia v Venezuela
Rancagua
Brazil v Peru
Temuco
Jun 17
Brazil v Colombia
Santiago
Jun 18
Peru v Venezuela
Valparaiso
Jun 21
Colombia v Peru
Temuco
Brazil v Venezuela
Santiago

Head to head...Neymar and Radamel Falcao will meet in Santiago on June 17

Top two in each group and the two 3rd-placed teams with the best record qualify for quarter-finals

QUARTER-FINALS

Jun 24 QF1
Gp A 1st v Best 3pl
Santiago
Jun 25 QF2
Gp A 2nd v Gp C 2nd
Temuco
Jun 26 QF3
Gp B 1st v 2nd-best 3pl *Vina del Mar*
Jun 27 QF4
Gp C 1st v Gp B 2nd
Concepcion

SEMI-FINALS

Jun 29
QF1 v QF2
Santiago
Jun 30
QF3 v QF4
Concepcion

3RD-PLACE

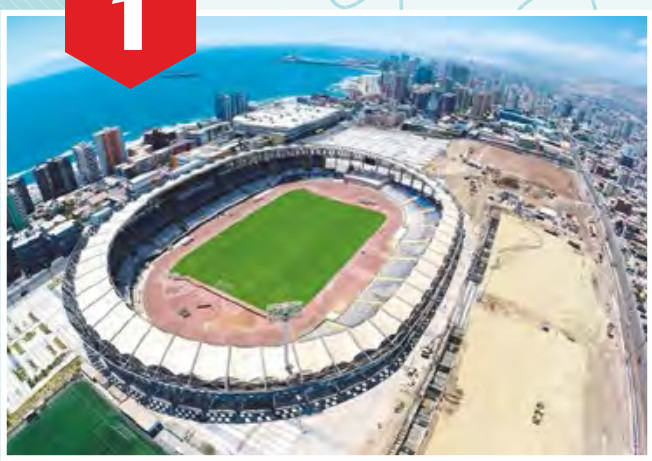
Jul 3 *Concepcion*

FINAL

Jul 4 *Santiago*

THE STADIUMS

Chile will stage its most decentralised tournament ever, across eight cities

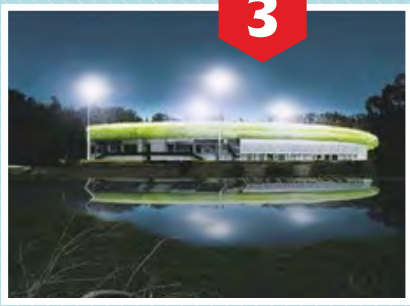


Estadio Regional de Antofagasta

Estadio La Portada

Estadio Elias Figueroa

Estadio Sausalito



Antofagasta 1

La Serena 2

3 Vina del Mar

Valparaiso 4

Santiago 5+6

Rancagua 7

8 Concepcion

9 Temuco

Estadio Nacional

Estadio Monumental David Arellano

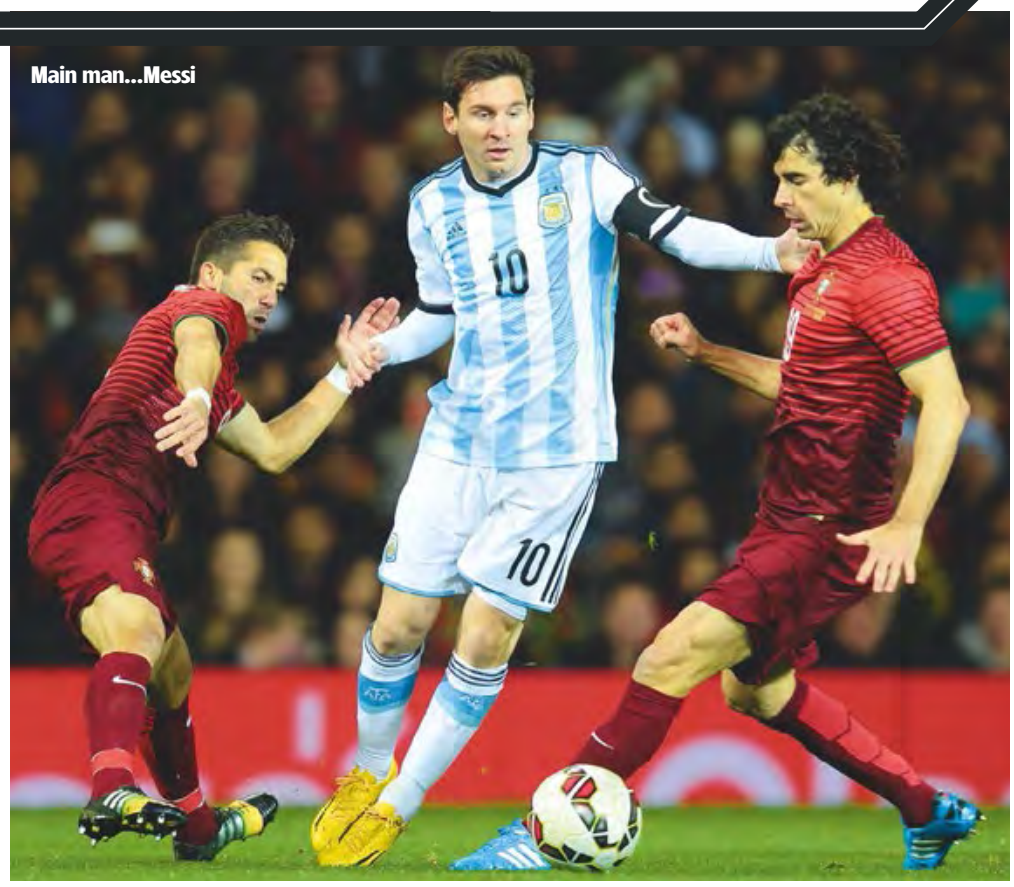
Estadio Municipal de Concepcion

Estadio El Teniente

Estadio Municipal German Becker

ARGENTINA

Now it's time to win something


Main man...Messi

Argentina are without a senior trophy since the 1993 Copa, and as coach Gerardo Martino points out: "This group of players cannot finish their cycle with the national team without winning a title."

Yet at the same time Martino also feels "the Copa America can't be something definitive in the mind of the players, because the World Cup qualifiers are coming straight afterwards". He is keen to stress "we're looking to consolidate as a team, to develop our idea of play".

In truth, Martino's side is not so different to that of his predecessor, Alejandro Sabella. Which means he faces the same problem: a lack of defensive pace.

During last year's World Cup this was not so apparent. Injuries to the attacking stars caused Sabella to rethink his team during the course of the competition and settle on a more cautious approach with a deeper defensive line. Once Martino took charge he soon ran into the same slow back-line problem. A few new centre-backs have subsequently been examined and discarded, and the injury to Mateo Musacchio of Villarreal is a real blow.

At the other end, there remains an embarrassment of attacking riches – all the more now with the recall of Carlos Tevez, who, it appeared, had not been on good terms with Lionel Messi.

If Argentina's strikers can stay fit and fire together, then the long wait for a lap of honour may be coming to an end.

> "This group of players cannot finish their cycle with the national team without winning a title"
>
> Argentina coach Gerardo Martino

ON THE BENCH

NAHUEL GUZMAN

Spoilt for choice with options up front

Like previous national coach Alejandro Sabella, Gerardo Martino's base idea for his Argentina side is a 4-3-3 set-up. The main difference, however, is that he prefers to see Angel Di Maria in the attacking line-up, rather than among the midfield trio.

This means that Sergio Aguero and Gonzalo Higuain – and now Carlos Tevez – are competing for one place, while the introduction of an extra all-round midfielder is an attempt to give the team more balance.

An alternative is a switch to 4-2-3-1 and have one of the midfielders replaced by a playmaker, essentially reversing the direction of the central midfield triangle.

Best performance: Winners in 1921, 1925, 1927, 1929, 1937, 1941, 1945, 1946, 1947, 1955, 1957, 1959, 1991 and 1993 (14 times)
Performance last time: Seventh

KEY PLAYERS

NAHUEL GUZMAN
AGE 29 (10.02.86)
Tigres (Mex)
Nominally the team's second-choice keeper but he is putting increasing pressure on Sergio Romero. In good club form and made his name under Martino at Newell's Old Boys.

NICOLAS OTAMENDI
AGE 27 *(12.02.88)*
Valencia (Spa)
Played out of position at right-back in the 2010 World Cup and only recently recalled on the back of a good club season. Has the chance to establish himself in the centre of the defence.

JAVIER MASCHERANO
AGE 30 (08.06.84)
Barcelona (Spa)
A central midfielder who can also drop back between the central defenders. Firm tackling and a decent range of passing makes him vital to the side.

LIONEL MESSI
AGE 27 (24.06.87)
Barcelona (Spa)
Approaching 100 caps but is still waiting for his first senior title at international level. Could this be the moment or might another long club season take its toll?

SERGIO AGUERO
AGE 26 (02.06.88)
Manchester City (Eng)
Scored plenty of goals but still feels he has yet to show his best form for his country. An excellent rapport with Messi should ensure that, if fit, he'll get the nod as centre-forward.

COACH

GERARDO MARTINO
AGE 52 (20.11.62)
The logical choice to succeed Sabella after the World Cup. His coaching CV includes Barcelona, Paraguay's national team and Newell's Old Boys – where he had previously starred as an elegant midfielder.

BOLIVIA

Bielsa the blueprint for Soria

"I'm aiming to do what Marcelo Bielsa did with Chile," said Mauricio Soria, raising the bar very high for himself on his appointment as Bolivia coach in January. "I want to play attacking football. I don't want to defend as much as we've normally done. We've lost many times playing that way, so let's attack."

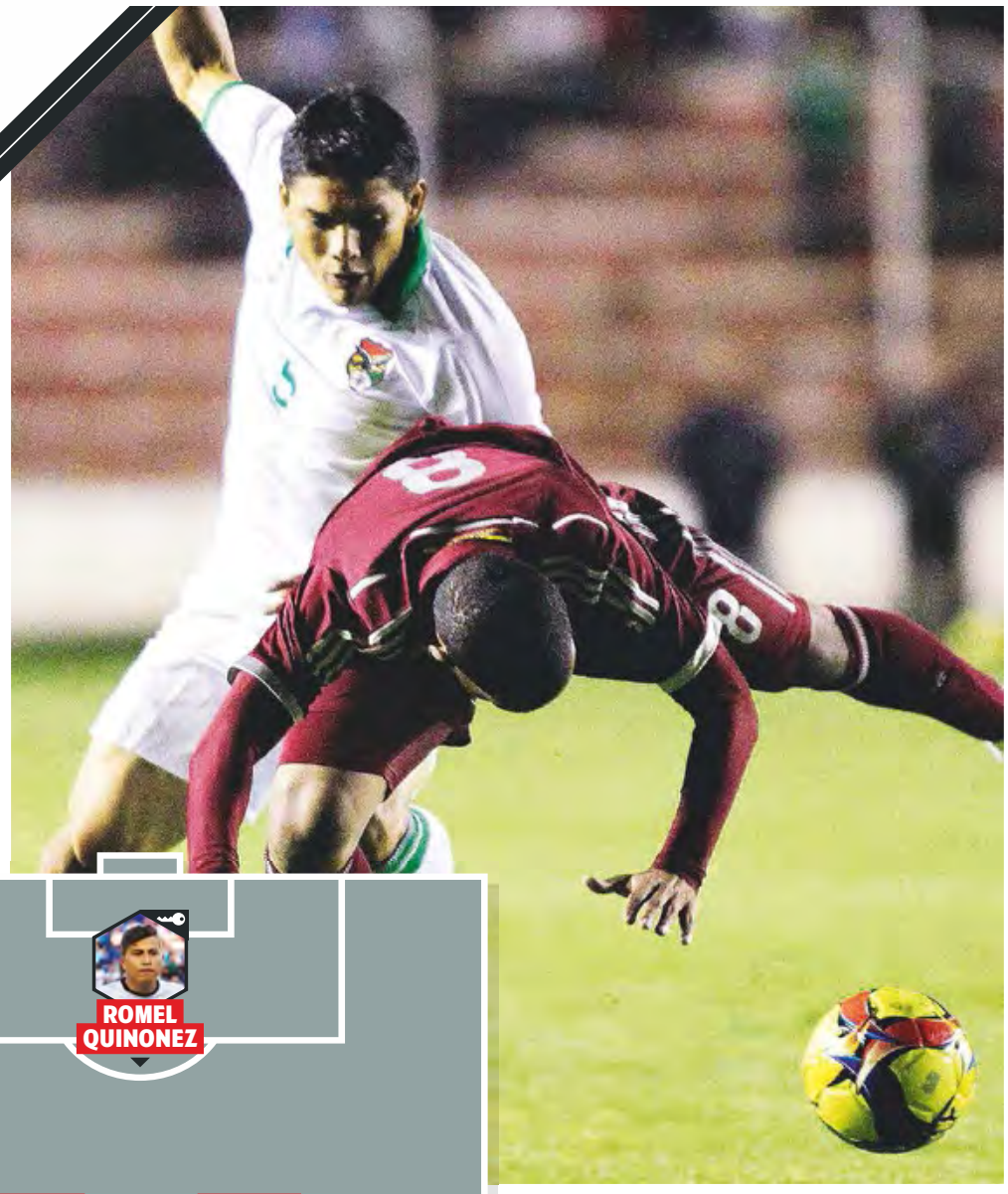
Such bold words come against a backdrop of administrative confusion as Bolivia's three previous internationals were overseen by three different coaches.

In September, veteran Spanish coach Xabier Azkargorta was put in caretaker command. Soria then took charge in October, for a creditable 2-2 draw in Chile, and was all set to be named permanent boss before running into political problems. While coaching the Blooming club he appeared to make disparaging remarks about the people of the city of Potosi, and in the ensuing storm Nestor Clausen took charge of November's 3-2 win over Venezuela.

> "I want to play attacking football. I don't want to defend as much as we've normally done"
>
> Bolivia coach Mauricio Soria

Having weathered the storm, Soria was appointed this year, but the problems had not yet ended and Bolivia pulled out of a friendly in Nigeria at the end of March. Soria did hold some training sessions, but that is of little use as Copa preparation.

On the plus side, Bolivian club sides' displays in the Libertadores Cup are much improved in the last two years, leading to optimism that this might filter through to the national team. However, the likely absence of captain Ronald Raldes through injury is a huge blow.



Competitive... Hurtado (in white)

Tight...Bolivia shut out Venezuela

More variation needed

"We need to take into account the characteristics of the opponent," says Mauricio Soria, "because we can't restrict ourselves to just one way of playing."

In October's 2-2 draw away to Chile, when only a last-minute penalty prevented a famous victory, he went with a 4-2-3-1 formation but felt his charges fell a little short of his aim "to have control of the ball and to arrive with frequency at the opposing goal".

However, his side showed an attacking purpose and an occasional threat down the flanks which they will look to reproduce on their return to Chilean soil.

- **Best performance:** Winners in 1963
- **Performance last time:** 11th

COACH

MAURICIO SORIA
Age 48 (01.06.66)
Former international goalkeeper, with 23 caps, who in a nine-year coaching career has won the Bolivian title with three different clubs. Eventually took over the national side in January.

KEY PLAYERS

ROMEL QUINONEZ
Age 22 (25.06.92)
Bolivar
Confident goalkeeper who came to the fore in his club's surprise run to the semi-finals of last year's Libertadores Cup. Not always as impressive this year, but has plenty of potential.

ALEJANDRO CHUMACERO
Age 24 (22.04.91)
The Strongest
A graduate from the 2011 under-20 side who adds dynamism to the midfield. Back home after an unsuccessful year with Sport Recife in Brazil.

PABLO ESCOBAR
Age 36 (23.02.79)
The Strongest
The naturalised Paraguayan playmaker has made himself available again after a self-imposed exile since scoring twice against the land of his birth in a World Cup qualifier in 2012.

JUAN CARLOS ARCE
Age 30 (10.04.85)
Bolivar
A product of the country's Academia Tahuici, the much-travelled winger has been plagued by injuries of late. If fit, he could be crucial to Soria's aim of raiding down the flanks.

MARCELO MARTINS MORENO
Age 27 (18.06.87)
Changchun Yatai (Chn)
Bolivian-born son of a former Brazilian midfielder. Target man who has not always lived up to his big-star billing and could face pressure from Carlos Saucedo.

BRAZIL

Friendly wins count for little

A run of eight successive wins by Dunga's side since a humiliating World Cup exit has caused some to trumpet the return of Brazil; others prefer to recall that predecessor Luiz Felipe Scolari's men went into last summer's tournament on a roll of nine consecutive victories.

All this would seem to indicate the unreliability of friendlies as a guide to genuine quality, and that the prestige Brazil lost in competitive action can only be regained in competitive action.

The Copa is Brazil's first real test since last year's debacle. Dunga is keen to stress the priority is whipping a side into shape for the World Cup qualifiers, but he knows what is at stake: one slip and all those friendly wins will be instantly forgotten.

The coach was by no means an obvious or a popular choice to return to the position he held in the four years up to the 2010 World Cup, and his brand of snarling pragmatism will only be praised, or even tolerated, as long as it is achieving results.

On the positive side, he can count on Neymar, who is increasingly maturing into a genuinely world-class striker. But Dunga can also point to his team's most impressive performance so far: a win in France in March achieved without much of a contribution from Neymar. It was a moment when Brazil demonstrated, perhaps even to themselves, that they are not just a one-man team.

Then there is perhaps the most positive news of all: it will be several decades before Brazil has to cope with the pressure of playing a World Cup at home again.

Chance...Firmino (centre)

> "The number of goals he scores won't be a problem – it's about how many World Cups he wins"
>
> Dunga on Neymar, who is expected to one day eclipse Pele's Brazil record of 77 international goals

Protection...Gustavo keeps France at bay

Neymar free to roam

Last year's World Cup failure has certainly not led to a radical overhaul of Brazil's game plan.

The principal change from Luiz Felipe Scolari's side is the replacement of a target man with a more mobile centre-forward. There has also been an effort to keep the team more compact. This enables a slight switch from the recent basic formation of 4-2-3-1.

With Neymar free to roam across the line, it starts to look more like a 4-4-2, although Chelsea's Oscar misses out through injury.

Against France in March the team bore a slight resemblance to the World Cup-winning side of 1994, when Romario and Bebeto were up front, with Dunga pulling strings in midfield.

■ **Best performance:** Winners in 1919, 1922, 1949, 1989, 1997, 1999, 2004 and 2007 (eight times)
■ **Performance last time:** Eighth

KEY PLAYERS

JEFFERSON
AGE 32 (02.01.83)
Botafogo
One-time clown's assistant who now has the serious task of being Brazil's first-choice goalkeeper – despite his club being in the second division – if he recovers from a knee injury in time.

DANILO
AGE 23 (15.07.91)
Porto (Por)
Has established himself as the post-World Cup right-back. Not as flash as some of his predecessors, but talented and versatile. He will join Real Madrid next term for €31.5million.

MIRANDA
AGE 30 (07.09.84)
Atletico Madrid (Spa)
Centre-back who was a baffling omission from the World Cup squad. Immediately installed by Dunga, his no-nonsense defending has been an important part of the side.

NEYMAR
AGE 23 (05.02.92)
Barcelona (Spa)
Made captain by Dunga and is relishing the responsibility. Brazil's talisman is fifth on their list of all-time scorers, although most of his goals so far have come in friendlies.

ROBERTO FIRMINO
AGE 23 (02.10.91)
Hoffenheim (Ger)
A virtual stranger to the Brazilian public when called up last year, the striker has made a good start to his international career. Links up the play and shoots well from range.

COACH

DUNGA
AGE 51 (31.10.63)
Abrasive character who played in three World Cups and was the winning captain in 1994. In his second spell in charge, his only other coaching job was a mediocre few months with Internacional.

CHILE

Expectation weighs heavily on hosts

It is fair to say that Jorge Sampaoli is well aware of the dangers that lie ahead for his side. "Chile have never won the Copa," says the Argentinian. "And seeing that we're up against opponents who've won it an immense number of times, demanding victory is a little irresponsible."

The burden of being at home has been playing on the coach's mind for a while – perhaps ever since the epic second-round encounter with Brazil at the World Cup, where his side were the width of a crossbar away from springing a surprise.

"Hopefully, the responsibility of being hosts will not generate the same pressure on us as it did on Brazil," say Sampaoli. And he is taking positive steps to ensure that it does not.

Serious thought was even given to the idea of letting the squad prepare in Europe, flying home just a few days before the tournament. Sampaoli saw this as "fundamental because it allows us to focus solely on the Copa". He reasoned that "we have huge responsibilities in the tournament and we can't permit lapses of concentration", and it was only at the start of May that the plan appeared to be discarded as impractical.

With two solid World Cups behind them, many feel that the current generation – who are seen as Chile's best ever – look set to launch a challenge for the title in front of their own fans.

There are, however, a few worries for Sampaoli, other than the hype that comes with playing on home soil.

For example, will key players Marcelo Diaz and Eduardo Vargas be fully fit in time? Who is going to play at centre-forward? And will the side be able to maintain the intense rhythm required by the coach during the entire tournament?

■ **Best performance:** Runners-up in 1955, 1956, 1979 and 1987 ■ **Performance last time:** Fifth

ON THE BENCH

JORGE VALDIVIA

Decision...if Vargas (no11) is not fully fit, Sampaoli may have to tinker with his prefered formation

Sampaoli's high-tempo approach

Jorge Sampaoli likes his side to press high, playing at an accelerated rhythm, and will hope they create two-against-one situations down the flanks.

This game plan is interpreted in one of two ways: either 4-3-3, which is normally employed against weaker opponents, or 3-4-1-2 against stronger sides. In the World Cup, they used the former against Australia and the latter in their other games.

Playing 4-3-3 in recent friendlies led to a defensive vulnerability, and defeats against Uruguay and Iran, which makes 3-4-1-2 look more likely.

If Eduardo Vargas is unfit, however, it is possible that Arturo Vidal and Jorge Valdivia might both operate behind Alexis Sanchez in a 3-4-2-1.

COACH

JORGE SAMPAOLI
Age 55 (13.03.60)
Constantly pacing his technical area, the little Argentinian is a self-confessed Marcelo Bielsa disciple. His big breakthrough came in charge of club side Universidad de Chile in 2011-12.

KEY PLAYERS

CLAUDIO BRAVO
Age 32 (13.04.83)
Barcelona (Spa)
Captain and keeper who is the country's most-capped player of all time. With the team defending high up the pitch, he needs to be swift and decisive when coming off his line.

GARY MEDEL
Age 27 (03.08.87)
Internazionale (Ita)
Stocky, feisty central midfielder at club level who operates in the back line for his country. Tackles hard and passes well, although his lack of height can be seen as a problem.

MARCELO DIAZ
Age 28 (30.12.86)
Hamburg (Ger)
Central midfielder who protects the defence but is able to initiate attacks with his passing. One worry is that he has had a disappointing, injury-hit first few months in Germany.

JORGE VALDIVIA
Age 31 (19.10.83)
Palmeiras (Bra)
Vital figure, although he is unlikely to start every game. Always controversial, often injured, but a twinkle-toed playmaker of real talent who cannot easily be replaced.

ALEXIS SANCHEZ
Age 26 (19.12.88)
Arsenal (Eng)
A winger, striker and attacking midfielder rolled into one, he offers talent, vision and work rate. The question is, will he be running on empty after a first season in the Premier League?

COLOMBIA

Dark horses looking to consolidate

Potent...Rodriguez (left) and Bacca

In the run-up to Brazil 2014, coach Jose Pekerman said that the tournament would mark the moment when Colombia took a definitive place at football's top table.

His side lived up to the opening part of that prediction, reaching the quarter-finals for the first time; now comes part two as they look to consolidate and become consistent top-level performers.

The grounds for optimism at the Copa are the same as those carried into the World Cup, only now on a much firmer footing. Colombia have a splendid generation of strikers and attacking midfielders, with fears of a dependence on Radamel Falcao proving unfounded. In his absence through injury, James Rodriguez came to the fore as the leading attacking force. Rodriguez, his playmaking deputy Juan Quintero and striker Carlos Bacca, have all added to their prestige and experience since last summer.

Much of Colombia's focus in Chile will be at the other end of the field, with long-term defensive linchpin Mario Yepes' international career having finally come to an end.

Pekerman spent the post-World Cup friendlies blooding a new breed of defender, and the progress of Jeison Murillo and Pedro Franco will be closely watched in their first competitive internationals – especially in the second game against Brazil, one of the potential highlights of the group phase.

With some identifying Colombia as the tournament dark horses, one of the most interesting aspects will be whether they can live up to those expectations.

> "I want to work with him again and help him restore his confidence"
>
> Colombia coach Jose Pekerman on misfiring striker Radamel Falcao

Falcao needs help

Radamel Falcao has never looked entirely happy as a lone striker, so when he plays for Colombia they usually line up in a 4-4-2 formation, with Carlos Bacca seemingly now in front of Teo Gutierrez as the other forward.

In Falcao's absence, Jose Pekerman tends to deploy his second striker – often Adrian Ramos – wide on the left, allowing James Rodriguez to move into the centre in a 4-2-3-1.

It will be interesting to observe the position of the defensive line. Previously, the need to protect Mario Yepes meant that Colombia defended very deep; they should now be able to move higher up the pitch.

Best performance: Winners in 2001
Performance last time: Sixth

KEY PLAYERS

DAVID OSPINA
Age 26 (31.08.88)
Arsenal (Eng)
First-choice keeper who came through a first Premier League season well. With an inexperienced unit in front of him, he will have to take more responsibility for organising defence.

JEISON MURILLO
Age 22 (27.05.92)
Granada (Spa)
Quick, combative centre-back who, despite playing for a struggling club, has looked impressive in the post-World Cup friendlies. He will join Internazionale next season.

ABEL AGUILAR
Age 30 (06.01.85)
Toulouse (Fra)
Unsung hero of the midfield, he marks with intelligence and his passing knits the team together. He was mystifyingly left out of the World Cup quarter-final game against Brazil.

JAMES RODRIGUEZ
Age 23 (12.07.91)
Real Madrid (Spa)
Left-footed attacking midfielder who was the revelation of the 2014 World Cup, where he was the leading scorer. The brains of the attack, he will be a marked man in the Copa.

RADAMEL FALCAO
Age 29 (10.02.86)
Manchester United (Eng) – on loan from Monaco (Fra)
Missed the World Cup with a serious knee injury and has had a frustrating time in England – but looked sharp on international duty in March.

COACH

JOSE PEKERMAN
Age 65 (03.09.49)
Argentinian who made his name as his country's youth coach before taking the seniors to the 2006 World Cup. An inspired choice to take over Colombia early in the 2014 World Cup qualifiers.

ECUADOR

The optimism is growing

The only South American team not to make it out of the group stage in the last two World Cups, there were rumours of a rift in the Ecuador camp after Brazil 2014 – apparently confirmed when star wingers Antonio Valencia and Jefferson Montero were not called up for the friendlies late last year under caretaker coach Sixto Vizuete.

However, new boss Gustavo Quinteros is not a man to stand for that kind of nonsense, and Ecuador were, barring injuries, back at full strength for his first games in charge at the end of March, which resulted in narrow defeats by Mexico and Argentina.

Quinteros, who a couple of weeks earlier had seemed not so upbeat, was sufficiently pleased with what he saw to declare that "we are on the right path".

> "Hopefully we can play more than just three games in the Copa and pick up as much experience as possible"
> Ecuador coach Gustavo Quinteros

He explained: "With nine or 10 more training sessions we can sort out the balance of the side.

"And hopefully we can play more than just three games in the Copa and pick up as much experience as possible on the way to the World Cup qualifiers."

Based in the country since 2012, Quinteros says: "I was surprised by Ecuadorian football when I arrived. It's much more competitive than I'd thought."

Harnessing that pace and power, adding some organisation and sound man management, Quinteros may be quietly thinking his team could provide a shock or two in this tournament.

Switch...Antonio Valencia

Traditional striker... Caceido

Vulnerable to the counter-attack

Gustavo Quinteros brings continuity by sticking to the recent tradition of playing 4-4-2 with a pair of quick, skilful wingers. A slight variation is to split the strikers to form something more resembling 4-2-3-1.

"I want us to press high and have the ball, to defend far from our own goal," says Quinteros. But this can leave the team vulnerable to the counter-attack. "We have to organise ourselves better defensively," he admits. "At times we leave ourselves wide open, with lots of space between the lines."

This problem is enhanced even more by a lack of quality centre-backs.

Best performance: Fourth in 1959 and 1993
Performance last time: 10th

COACH

GUSTAVO QUINTEROS
AGE 50 (15.02.65)
Argentinian-born but a naturalised Bolivian, he played for his adopted country in the 1994 World Cup and coached them at the last Copa. Was with Ecuadorian club Emelec for three years.

KEY PLAYERS

FRICKSON ERAZO
AGE 26 (05.05.88)
Gremio (Bra), on loan from Barcelona SC
Elegant centre-back but defensively suspect. Getting a bit more game time with his new club this year after a disastrous previous spell with Flamengo.

CHRISTIAN NOBOA
AGE 30 (09.04.85)
PAOK (Gre)
Central midfielder who has not looked back since scoring against Brazil at the 2010 World Cup. He has an excellent range of passing and is the main supply line to the wingers.

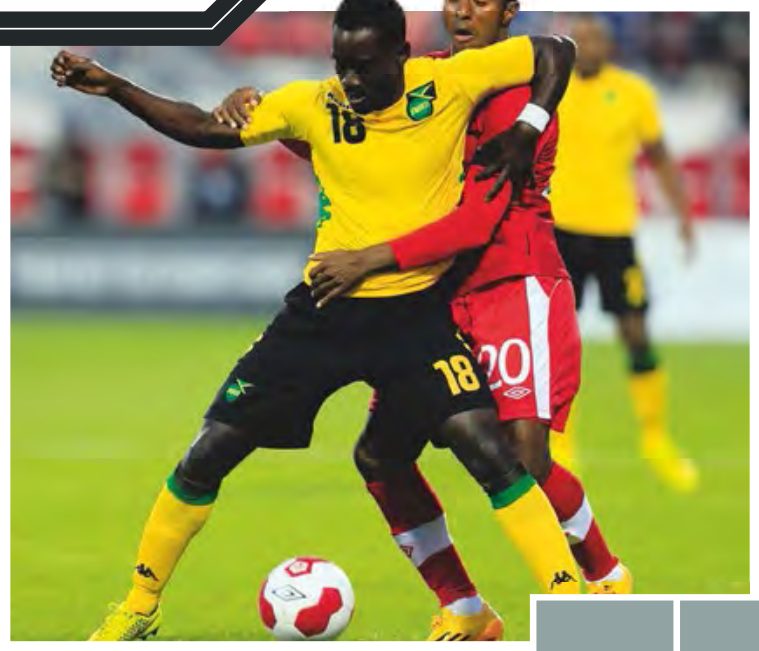
ANTONIO VALENCIA
AGE 29 (04.08.85)
Manchester Utd (Eng)
Central midfielder who was transformed into a winger of pace and power at club level, he now plays as a right-back – a switch Quinteros says is a possibility with the national team.

ENNER VALENCIA
AGE 25 (04.11.89)
West Ham United (Eng)
Has not looked back since being switched by Quinteros from wide midfielder to a striking role at Emelec. Scored 10 goals in 10 internationals last year, including three at the World Cup.

MILLER BOLANOS
AGE 24 (01.06.90)
Emelec
Blossomed under Quinteros last year as a dangerous and skilful support striker. He is a more mobile alternative up front to Felipe Caicedo, who is better with his back to goal.

JAMAICA

Rotation key for debutants



Option...Dawkins

Jamaica will compete in the tournament for the first time after Japan rejected CONMEBOL's invitation to appear as guests alongside Mexico. There was no official explanation as to why the "Reggae Boyz" were approached, although the Centennial Copa America in 2016 will take place in the USA and feature 16 teams, including six from CONCACAF.

The key figures in the current squad are drawn from the English second tier and America's MLS, as well as the Jamaican league. And the team go into the tournament in good spirits, buoyed by victory in the Caribbean Cup last November and friendly wins over Venezuela and Cuba in March.

German coach Winfried Schafer, who led Cameroon at the 2002 World Cup, has brought more discipline to Jamaica since being appointed in 2013. After presiding over their sixth Caribbean Cup title, he faces a double challenge with the Copa followed three days later by the CONCACAF Gold Cup in the United States.

"We'll need two strong teams for these two tournaments," says Schafer. "We cannot play like Venezuela or Argentina; our football is fighting, passing, counter-attack, teamwork. That is what we need."

Rotation will be key with some fringe players and newcomers such as Lewis Grabban of Norwich City and Reading's Michael Hector being tested.

Of the English-born players with Jamaican heritage, former Derby County forward Giles Barnes, now with Houston Dynamo, is the latest to accept a call-up.

> "Our football is fighting, passing, counter-attack, teamwork. That is what we need"
>
> Jamaica coach Winfried Schafer

Pace...Grant

Pace on the counter a potent weapon

Winfried Schafer is likely to stick with the 4-4-1-1 system that he used in recent friendly victories against Venezuela and Cuba. His is a team packed with pace and dynamism, so opponents will need to be wary of quick counter-attacks.

The coach has plenty of options on the flanks, with Garath McCleary, Simon Dawkins, Joel Grant and Giles Barnes capable of producing goals as well as assists.

Schafer has seen his defence keep four clean sheets in their last five games, although Lionel Messi and Edinson Cavani will provide a much tougher test than recent opponents.

Michael Hector might be drafted into the back line, while Barnes will play off Darren Mattocks, with McCleary most likely offering support.

■ ■ First time at the Copa America

KEY PLAYERS

RODOLPH AUSTIN
Age 29 (01.06.85)
Unattached
The midfielder, released by Leeds United at the end of the season, is the team's captain. Disciplined and tactically aware, he is a firm favourite with the supporters.

KEMAR LAWRENCE
Age 22 (17.09.92)
New York Red Bulls (USA)
Nicknamed "Taxi" due to his penchant for marauding up and down the pitch, he is a promising left-back whose father was the national team's keeper in the 1970s.

JOBI McANUFF
Age 33 (09.11.81)
Leyton Orient (Eng)
One of many British-born players in the squad, he was a vital component of the team's 2014 Caribbean Cup victory, orchestrating the play from midfield.

ALVAS POWELL
Age 20 (18.07.94)
Portland Timbers (USA)
A versatile defender enjoying a sparkling season, he possesses great speed and athleticism, having originally made his name in Jamaica's Da Costa Cup.

DARREN MATTOCKS
Age 24 (01.09.90)
Vancouver Whitecaps (USA)
Pacy striker, known for his extravagant hairstyle, who is in a rich vein of form for his country having scored five goals in his last six appearances.

COACH

WINFRIED SCHAFER (GER)
Age 65 (10.01.50)
Took over during the 2014 World Cup campaign from Theodore Whitmore. Coached Karlsruher in the 1990s and led Cameroon to the 2002 African Nations Cup title.

MEXICO

Looking to avoid another embarrassment

With plenty of talent at their disposal, and several of their key players starring at good European club sides, Mexico could, in theory, field quite a strong team at the Copa.

However, Real Madrid's on-loan striker Javier Hernandez, Porto's Hector Herrera and Carlos Vela of Real Sociedad will all be absent in Chile, as will the Dos Santos brothers and Espanyol's Hector Moreno. This is because the Mexican FA has once again decided to send their strongest squad to the CONCACAF Gold Cup, which kicks off a few days after the Copa finishes.

The Mexican side that heads south will therefore be composed mostly of decent players from the Liga MX, youngsters based in Europe and veteran captain Rafa Marquez, who personally requested to play as part of a conditioning plan proposed by his club Verona.

Still, at least this team will be way better than the one Mexico sent four years ago, which, on CONCACAF's request, was made up of under-23 players and embarrassed the nation by losing all three of their games.

The fact that same team ended up winning gold at the London Olympics wasn't enough to convince the Mexican FA to repeat the experiment and this year's squad should have enough quality to challenge for a second-round spot.

> "We can get to the Final of the Copa. Mexico has been in a Final before and I believe we can do it"
>
> An optimistic Mexico coach, Miguel Herrera

Last hurrah...but Mexico will need Marquez's experience

■ **Best performance:** Runners-up in 1993 and 2001 ■ **Performance last time:** 12th

New faces in tried and tested set-up

Shoring up midfield...Medina

With so many first-choice players missing, it is unclear who will get the nod for a starting place in Chile. What is sure, however, is that Miguel Herrera will stick with the trademark 5-3-2 that he has used throughout his tenure and was employed with great success in Brazil 2014.

The system places great emphasis on the wingbacks, who cover the whole of their flank as the three midfielders stay central. Whether the Copa squad has players with the quality to do this remains to be seen.

The rest of the side has good quality, with Jesus Corona a safe choice in goal, Rafa Marquez providing leadership in defence, and a couple of strikers with great potential in Twente's Jesus Manuel Corona and Raul Jimenez of Atletico Madrid.

COACH

MIGUEL HERRERA
Age 47 (18.03.68)
Made a big impression at the World Cup with his celebrations and no-nonsense tactical approach. Says the Gold Cup is a priority but he "intends to win the Copa America as well".

KEY PLAYERS

JESUS CORONA
Age 34 (26.01.81)
Cruz Azul
Gold medallist at the 2012 Olympics but lost his place to Guillermo Ochoa just before Brazil 2014. A good Copa could put him back into the starting XI for the Russia 2018 qualifiers.

RAFA MARQUEZ
Age 36 (13.02.79)
Verona (Ita)
Chile will probably be the swansong for a captain who provides leadership to an inexperienced back line. A disappointing season in Italy saw him out injured for much of the time.

LUIS MONTES
Age 28 (15.05.86)
Leon
Elegant and technical midfielder who was set to feature in Brazil last summer before a leg injury sidelined him. Now wants to show the rest of the continent what it missed.

JESUS MANUEL CORONA
Age 22 (06.01.93)
Twente (Hol)
Can play in a variety of positions, although tends to be used as a support striker in Herrera's rigid system. May leave debt-ridden Twente for a bigger club in the summer.

RAUL JIMENEZ
Age 24 (05.05.91)
Atletico Madrid (Spa)
Struggled with the physicality of La Liga in his debut campaign and is likely to be loaned out next term – unless a good tournament in Chile changes opinions in Madrid.

PARAGUAY

Old problems for new coach

Wingback...Jorge Moreira against Mexico

Gerardo Martino saw the signs in the previous Copa. A year earlier he had taken Paraguay to their first World Cup quarter-final; now they went all the way to the Final of the 2011 Copa – albeit without winning a single game. The coach understood that he had taken that team as far as he could and he resigned soon after a 3-0 defeat by Germany.

His replacement, Francisco Arce, made the mistake of trying to change too much too soon. Paraguay made a dreadful start to the 2014 World Cup qualifiers and never recovered. They finished bottom of the table, and after four consecutive finals had to sit out the one held on their doorstep.

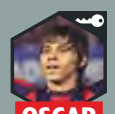
And so, this year, Ramon Diaz has been appointed in a bid to get the team back on track. Like Martino, he is an Argentinian, but unlike his countryman he has no experience of Paraguayan club football. With limited time in which to keep track of players strewn all over the world, it is little wonder that Diaz says this job is "the biggest challenge of my career".

He has wisely retained an experienced core of players in key positions down the spine of the team, but there could be a problem up front.

As it may be too much to expect Roque Santa Cruz to haul his battered body through yet another Copa, Lucas Barrios was recalled in March. But he looks a shadow of the man who led the line in the 2010 World Cup, so Diaz faces the traditional headache of Paraguay's national coach: where will the goals come from?

> "He's a person who can restore a sense of standing to the team"
>
> Roque Santa Cruz on coach Ramon Diaz

ON THE BENCH


OSCAR ROMERO

Goal-shy strike force remains a worry

"We're going to respect two things," says coach Ramon Diaz. "Play well and play for the points when necessary."

As under Gerardo Martino, Diaz will attempt to build a side that can both take the initiative, and sit back and defend with typical Paraguayan resilience. In the friendlies at the end of March he had a look at two systems: a 4-3-3 with hard working wingers against Costa Rica, and 3-4-1-2 against Mexico – with the holding midfielder replaced by a third centre-back and a playmaker introduced in place of one of the wingers.

The problem in both games was that they failed to score ...

Best performance: Winners in 1953 and 1979 (twice)
Performance last time: Runners-up

KEY PLAYERS

PAULO DA SILVA
Age 35 (01.02.80)
Toluca (Mex)
Paraguay's most-capped player is still going strong as the solid, stocky organiser of the defence. He requires just one more game to complete 50 World Cup qualifiers.

PABLO AGUILAR
Age 28 (02.05.87)
America (Mex)
Classy defender who can play anywhere along the back line and is seemingly destined to take over from Da Silva as the defensive organiser. Carries a threat from set pieces.

RICHARD ORTIZ
Age 25 (22.05.90)
Toluca (Mex)
Barrel-chested midfielder with strength, lung power and a useful left foot. Can operate centrally or wide – and even at left-back, where he made his senior international debut.

OSCAR ROMERO
Age 22 (04.07.92)
Racing (Arg)
May not start as he has struggled since moving to Racing, but as a playmaker, his ability to surge forward and shoot from range could be a useful part of the team's attacking play.

RAUL BOBADILLA
Age 27 (18.06.87)
Augsburg (Ger)
Argentina-born striker who was recently naturalised and rapidly called up to the squad at the end of March. Stocky and strong, he can play in a wide or central attacking role.

COACH

RAMON DIAZ
Age 55 (29.08.59)
Ex-Argentina striker whose coaching career is most associated with River Plate but who also had a brief spell in charge of Oxford United. Appointed to his current post in December 2014.

PERU

Cure needed for away-day blues

Third place with an injury-hit squad at the last Copa proved a false dawn for the team then coached by Sergio Markarian. Once the World Cup qualifiers got under way, Peru were hit by an old problem: the inability to compete away from home.

Since failing to make France 98 on goal difference, Peru's away record in qualification reads won 2, drawn 6 and lost 27, with their last victory coming in 2004.

The problem is part mental and part physical, with Pablo Bengoechea, who was Markarian's assistant and then had a brief spell in caretaker command, complaining that the team were unable to sustain their rhythm over 90 minutes. Another more obvious problem is the lack of outstanding talent. And these are now the problems of Ricardo Gareca, whose task is made all the harder by a lack of preparation time.

> "I'm sure we will give a good account of ourselves"
>
> Peru coach Ricardo Gareca

Although Gareca coached in Peruvian club football from 2007 to 2008, he has had to take over the national side with precious little time to get to know the domestically-based players and assess the form of those who play abroad.

"I accept this challenge," said Gareca on his presentation at the start of March in the knowledge that it's going to be a tough task, but not an impossible one. After his first game, a 1-0 defeat by Venezuela, he said: "I don't know if we'll arrive at the Copa America fully prepared, but I'm sure will give a good account of ourselves".

Combative...veteran 36-year-old striker Claudio Pizarro in action against Chile

Togetherness...Peru celebrate a goal against Paraguay

Playmaker, anyone?

As his players assembled for their first training sessions in March, coach Ricardo Gareca said: "We'll take a few days to decide how to play. My preference is for a number 10 style playmaker, but we'll have a look at what we've got."

In the event, he went with a 4-2-3-1 against Venezuela that was most concerned with a search for speed on the counter-attack – and that could be the template for the Copa, given that Peru find themselves in a tricky group.

With attacking full-backs and some pace down the flanks, Gareca will trust that his team can provide a sufficient supply line to centre-forward Paolo Guerrero.

- **Best performance:** Winners in 1939 and 1975 (twice)
- **Performance last time:** Third

COACH

RICARDO GARECA
Age 57 (10.02.58)
Argentinian who scored the goal that prevented Peru's qualification for Mexico 86. Coached Universitario in Peru, but is best known for a successful four-year spell in his homeland with Velez Sarsfield.

KEY PLAYERS

PEDRO GALLESE
Age 25 (23.02.90)
Juan Aurich
Has emerged in the last two years as a lithe, athletic goalkeeper who saved a penalty on his international debut against Panama in August last year.

CARLOS ZAMBRANO
Age 25 (10.07.89)
Eintracht Frankfurt (Ger)
Centre-back "*El Kaiser*" was Gareca's choice of captain for his first match, but he has never totally lived up to his billing and has been prone to moments of rashness.

JOSEPMIR BALLON
Age 27 (21.03.88)
Sporting Cristal
Tall, central midfielder with a sound range of passing who has shown in this year's Libertadores Cup that he is capable of dropping into a defensive line of three.

CRISTIAN BENAVENTE
Age 20 (19.05.94)
Real Madrid (Spa)
Spain-born attacking midfielder, he plays for Real's reserve side, Castilla, and was thrown into the closing stages of the last World Cup qualifying campaign.

PAOLO GUERRERO
Age 31 (01.01.84)
Corinthians (Bra)
Top scorer in the last Copa and hero of Corinthians' 2012 Club World Cup triumph. Strong and calm in the box, he is in sight of becoming Peru's all-time top marksman.

URUGUAY

Building for the future

At home...Gimenez

In the nine years of his second spell in charge of Uruguay, Oscar Tabarez has achieved great things, reaching the semi-finals of the 2010 World Cup and leading his country to a record 15th Copa America triumph a year later. Now comes the time for the next phase of the coach's work: the rebuilding of the side with the promotion of graduates from Uruguay's highly successful youth ranks.

This process has been ongoing since last summer's World Cup – with pleasing results so far.

Debuts have been handed to nine players since Brazil 2014 – including some of the side who were runners-up in the 2013 World Under-20 Cup – and the team's post-World Cup record includes a 2-1 win away to Copa hosts Chile. Now, however, comes the first competitive test – and with Luis Suarez still suspended.

Tabarez made his priorities clear in mid-April when he said he was looking forward to the Copa "because as well as its own value, it is an opportunity for us to show ourselves and an important step on the way to our main objective at this stage, which is qualifying for Russia in 2018".

Tabarez, then, will be seeking to use the tournament to consolidate the newcomers into a squad that is, like the previous one, more than capable of punching above its weight and snatching results against theoretically superior rivals.

There is also an added incentive to make as much progress as possible in the Copa: the more games Uruguay play in Chile, the fewer World Cup qualifiers Suarez will miss through suspension.

> "It is an opportunity for us to show ourselves and an important step on the way to our main objective at this stage, which is qualifying for Russia in 2018"
>
> Uruguay coach Oscar Tabarez on his Copa hopes

Midfield option...Giorgian De Arrascaeta

Suarez absence is a big factor

Ever since Oscar Tabarez disposed of the fixed 4-3-3 following a 3-0 defeat by Peru in the opening game of the 2007 Copa, there has been an acknowledgement that Uruguay need to be able to switch formations in accordance with the opposition.

Three different systems were employed in the course of the last World Cup. And although there has been no return to a back three since then, there have still been plenty of variations.

Tabarez's 4-3-3 continues to look very open, so he has also tried 4-4-2, 4-2-3-1 and a 4-3-2-1, with the two attacking midfielders working the touchline. In the absence of Luis Suarez there will clearly be a temptation to pack the midfield at the Copa.

■ **Best performance:** Winners in 1916, 1917, 1920, 1923, 1924, 1926, 1935, 1942, 1956, 1959 , 1967, 1983, 1987, 1995 and 2011 (15 times)
■ **Performance last time:** Winners

KEY PLAYERS

DIEGO GODIN
Age 29 (16.02.86)
Atletico Madrid (Spa)
Tough, classy centre-back who has grown into his role as team captain and leader of the defensive line. He also has a habit of popping up with the occasional important goal.

JOSE GIMENEZ
Age 20 (20.01.95)
Atletico Madrid (Spa)
Centre-back who was the first of the 2013 under-20 team to be promoted. Although called up to cover injuries, suspensions and the decline of Diego Lugano, he looks right at home.

EGIDIO AREVALO
Age 33 (01.01.82)
Tigres (Mex)
Defensive midfielder who is the soul of the side. Operates within his limitations, covering and snapping into tackles. Nearing the end of his career, he will not be easy to replace.

NICOLAS LODEIRO
Age 26 (21.03.89)
Boca Juniors (Arg)
Stocky playmaker at last showing signs of fulfilling the hopes Uruguay have had for him since 2009. Tabarez praises the quicker passing and rhythm of his game this year.

EDINSON CAVANI
Age 28 (14.02.87)
Paris Saint-Germain (Fra)
With Suarez banned and Diego Forlan retired, he at last has the chance to be top dog. For much of his Uruguay career, he has been required to operate far from goal.

COACH

OSCAR TABAREZ
Age 68 (03.03.47)
A qualified teacher as well as a former centre-back, "*El Maestro*" is a coach of vast experience. Now in his second spell, he took Uruguay to the 1990 World Cup before taking over once more in 2006.

VENEZUELA

Tired, old legs could be a big worry

A creditable fourth place in the last Copa was followed by a famous win over Argentina in the second round of the 2014 World Cup qualifiers – leading to hopes that Venezuela might finally make their debut in the finals of that competition.

In the end, they tailed off and finished five points short of the play-off position, with a haul of just 14 goals in 16 games telling its own story.

There are worries at the other end as well and coach Noel Sanvicente has had an uneasy first year in charge, with a lack of pace in an ageing defensive unit proving a big problem.

"We've been very inconsistent," said Sanvicente, summing up his reign so far after a 1-0 win over Peru in the USA at the end of March. "There are times when we're creating chances but we're also conceding a lot of goals.

"We can't be satisfied with producing moments of good football. Instead, we have to sustain this with more movement and the kind of intensity I'm asking for."

The Copa is his chance to spend more time with his players and drill them into a more compact unit, capable of standing up to the problems that will be posed by group opponents Colombia and Brazil.

Venezuela will look on the second game, against Peru, as their best opportunity to pick up three points – if Sanvicente can sort out his side's own obvious problems.

Slow...Vizcarrondo and his fellow defenders lack pace

■ **Best performance:** 4th in 2011 ■ **Performance last time:** 4th

Adopt a high line or drop deep?

Noel Sanvicente is traditionally a fan of 4-2-2-2, with a pair of defensively minded central midfielders, and another pair of more attacking ones thrown wide. However, wary of leaving his side too open, a common variation has been the switch to a 4-2-3-1, essentially splitting the strikers, with the second one dropping deeper.

The position of the defensive line will be interesting. If they play a high line, a lack of pace could be exposed; if they drop deep then the two central midfielders can be isolated and overrun.

The aim will surely be to try to stay compact and get enough players up to support the centre-forward.

COACH

NOEL SANVICENTE
Age 50 (21.12.64)
"Chita" is a former international striker who has won the Venezuelan league title seven times as a coach: five with Caracas and two with Zamora. A popular choice when he took over in July last year.

KEY PLAYERS

OSWALDO VIZCARRONDO
Age 30 (31.05.84)
Nantes (Fra)
Commanding central defender and leader of the line under Sanvicente at Caracas. Now playing in Europe, he is starting to look a little heavy in the legs.

TOMAS RINCON
Age 27 (13.01.88)
(Genoa (Ita)
The key link man in midfield, he knits the side together with his intelligent passing. He can also play as a full-back but is not a natural defender and is liable to make rash challenges.

JUAN ARANGO
Age 35 (17.05.80)
Tijuana (Mex)
Attacking midfielder who was in the 1999 Copa squad and is now the country's most-capped player. May be approaching the end of his career, but is still useful from set pieces.

JOSEF MARTINEZ
Age 22 (19.05.93)
Torino (Ita)
Quick support striker whose movement can cause problems for defences, either on the flank or in a withdrawn central position. Has played in Switzerland as well as Italy.

SALOMON RONDON
Age 25 (16.09.89)
Zenit (Rus)
Centre-forward with great strength and good technique. The team's most potent attacking weapon, he scored five times in World Cup qualifiers but has struggled to find the net since.

June 1993

Marseille and Milan prepare for Champions League Final

World-record signing Gianluigi Lentini of Milan was on *World Soccer*'s cover, with an inset of Marseille's Rudi Voller, ahead of the European Cup Final in Munich.

The Final would be a contest between two clubs that were owned by two of European football's richest and most controversial figures: French multi-millionaire Bernard Tapie, who owned Marseille, and Silvio Berlusconi, owner of hot favourites Milan.

It also brought together two of Europe's most notable coaches: the "old man" Raymond Goethals of Marseille and Milan's up-and-coming Italian, Fabio Capello.

Previewing events that were likely to unfold on the pitch, Keir Radnedge wrote; "Milan won all their six matches in the qualifying Champions League and have only recently come off the end of an unbeaten run of 58 Italian league games spanning nearly two years.

"They have been hailed far and wide as the finest team in the world – whether at national team or club level – and their methods, tactics and jewel-encrusted squad are the envy of everyone."

But Radnedge also sounded a word of caution. "Marco Van Basten has only just returned to duty after being out injured since last December. Fellow striker Jean-Pierre Papin, with a thigh injury, may not even be fit for Munich.

"The pressures of high-profile football hyperactivity have worn down even the house that Berlusconi built. Marseille looked seriously weakened earlier in the season. But German veteran Rudi Voller and Croatian striker Alen Boksic have provided them with new thrust in attack while Basile Boli [who would eventually go on to score the only goal in the Final] and Manuel Amoros remain among Europe's finest, and most ruthless, defenders."

Marseille's Ghanaian international Abedi Pele certainly thought that an upset was on the cards and he was hoping to make amends for the French club's defeat in the Final to Red Star Belgrade two years previously. He told *World Soccer*: "We learnt a great deal from that first Final. We are a much better team now and we are going into this Final against Milan with so much confidence you would be surprised.

"Of course Milan will start as favourites. But Milan have always had problems playing against us. We understand their game, we understand their mentality and their approach, and we know how they play. Our chances really are that good."

Radnedge concluded his preview by suggesting: "If anyone and anything can find the key to unlock Milan, it will not be Tapie and all his money but the remarkable 72-year-old who is now operating as Marseille's caretaker manager for the third time in as many seasons.

"Raymond Goethals says he really is going [to retire] after this Final. Nothing would give him more satisfaction than to hand out a tactical lesson to 'young' Fabio Capello on the Milan bench." WS

> "We are going into this Final against Milan with so much confidence you would be surprised"
>
> Marseille's Abedi Pele

Showdown... Munich preview

Cover star...Lentini

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Second chance . . . Abedi Pele was on the losing side with Marseille in 1991.

ty Plus

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Marseille V Milan

Champions' Cup Final May 26 in Munich

Preview by KEIR RADNEDGE

Second generation . . . Paolo Maldini is the son of a 1963 winner with Milan.

ABEDI PELE, Marseille's spectacular Ghanaian, believes the French champions really can achieve the upset of the season and topple hot favourites Milan in the Champions' Cup Final in Munich on May 26.

Milan won all their six matches in the qualifying Champions League and have only recently come off the end of an unbeaten run of 58 Italian League games spanning nearly two years.

They have been hailed far and wide as the finest team in the world — whether at national team or club level — and their methods, tactics and jewel-encrusted squad are the envy of everyone.

But Milan are vulnerable. Since Roma, in the Cup, and Parma, in the League, punctured their domestic aura of invincibility, Milan have looked anything but confident giants. Quite the reverse.

Marco Van Basten has only just returned to duty after being out injured since an ankle operation last December; fellow striker Jean-Pierre Papin, with a thigh injury, may not even be fit for Munich. The pressures of high-profile football hyperactivity have worn down even the house which Berlusconi built. But Pele, now 31, believes Marseille's shoot-out defeat in the 1991 Final by Red Star Belgrade will prove to be the key factor in springing an upset.

Pele says: "I'm delighted to be getting a second chance. Not many players get that. We learned a great deal as a team and as individuals from that first final. We are a much better team now and we are going into this final against Milan with so much confidence you would be surprised.

"Of course, Milan will start as everyone's favourites. But Milan have always had problems playing against us. We understand their game, we understand their mentality and their approach and we know how they play. Our chances really are that good."

Marseille beat Milan in the quarter-finals on their way to the 1991 Final and so upset the Italian champions that they tried to seek refuge in a last-minute floodlight failure to storm off the pitch. That behavioural blunder cost Milan a year's ban from European competition — but it illustrates Pele's point.

Papin admits that playing against Marseille is not exactly a dream final. He would have preferred Rangers as opposition.

Marseille, having sold Papin, Chris Waddle and Brazilian sweeper Carlos Mozer, looked seriously weakened early in this season. But German veteran Rudi Voller and Croatian striker Alen Boksic have provided Marseille with new thrust in attack while Basile Boli and Manuel Amoros remain among Europe's finest — and most ruthless — defenders.

When it comes to playing football out of defence, Milan have no peers. Franco Baresi and Paolo Maldini would stroll into any world select. In front of them Frank Rijkaard, Ruud Gullit, world record signing Gianluigi Lentini plus any mixture from Albertini, Simone, Massaro and Co. will scare the life out of anyone . . . except, obviously, Marseille.

Potentially, this could turn out to be a match quite the equal in quality of last year's in which Barcelona beat Sampdoria.

What is certain is an enormous amount of media hype — natural on the Italian side and equally predictable for Marseille, because it will centre on controversial millionaire president Bernard Tapie.

All the claims and counter-claims will be trotted out: that he picks the team and gives the half-time pep talks.

But if anyone and anything can find the key to unlock Milan it will not be Tapie and all his money but the remarkable 72-year-old who is now operating as Marseille's caretaker manager for the third time in as many seasons.

Raymond Goethals says he really is going after this Final. Nothing would give him more satisfaction than to hand out a tactical lesson to "young" Fabio Capello on the Milan bench.

Milan v Marseille is more than a football match; it's the Personality-Plus Final.

PREVIOUS CHAMPIONS' CUP FINALS

Year	Opponents	Res	Venue	Att
1956	Real Madrid v Stade de Reims	4-3	Paris	38,000
1957	Real Madrid v Fiorentina	2-0	Madrid	124,000
1958	Real Madrid v Milan	3-2 (aet)	Brussels	67,000
1959	Real Madrid v Stade de Reims	2-0	Stuttgart	80,000
1960	Real Madrid v Eintracht Frankfurt	7-3	Glasgow	127,621
1961	Benfica v Barcelona	3-2	Berne	33,000
1962	Benfica v Real Madrid	5-3	Amsterdam	68,000
1963	Milan v Benfica	2-1	Wembley	45,000
1964	Internazionale v Real Madrid	3-1	Vienna	72,000
1965	Internazionale v Benfica	1-0	Milan	80,000
1966	Real Madrid v Partizan Belgrade	2-1	Brussels	55,000
1967	Celtic v Internazionale	2-1	Lisbon	55,000
1968	Manchester United v Benfica	4-1 (aet)	Wembley	100,000
1969	Milan v Ajax	4-1	Madrid	50,000
1970	Feyenoord v Celtic	2-1 (aet)	Milan	53,187
1971	Ajax v Panathinaikos	2-0	Wembley	90,000
1972	Ajax v Internazionale	2-0	Rotterdam	61,000
1973	Ajax v Juventus	1-0	Belgrade	93,500
1974	Bayern Munich v Atletico Madrid	1-1 (aet)	Brussels	85,000
Replay	Bayern Munich v Atletico Madrid	4-0	Brussels	23,000
1975	Bayern Munich v Leeds United	2-0	Paris	48,000
1976	Bayern Munich v St Etienne	1-0	Glasgow	54,684
1977	Liverpool v Borussia Mg	3-1	Rome	57,000
1978	Liverpool v Club Brugge	1-0	Wembley	92,000
1979	Nottm. Forest v Malmo	1-0	Munich	57,500
1980	Nottm. Forest v Hamburg SV	1-0	Madrid	51,000
1981	Liverpool v Real Madrid	1-0	Paris	48,360
1982	Aston Villa v Bayern Munich	1-0	Rotterdam	46,000
1983	Hamburg SV v Juventus	1-0	Athens	80,000
1984	Liverpool v AS Roma	1-1	Rome	69,693
1985	Juventus v Liverpool	1-0	Brussels	58,000
1986	Steaua Bucharest v Barcelona	0-0	Seville	70,000
		2-0 (pens)		
1987	FC Porto v Bayern Munich	2-1	Vienna	56,000
1988	PSV Eindhoven v Benfica	0-0	Stuttgart	55,000
		6-5 (pens)		
1989	Milan v Steaua Bucharest	4-0	Barcelona	97,000
1990	Milan v Benfica	1-0	Vienna	58,000
1991	Red Star Belgrade v Marseille	0-0	Bari	50,000
		4-5 (pens)		
1992	Barcelona v Sampdoria	1-0	Wembley	74,000

MARSEILLE SQUAD

PLAYER	P	Birth	Previous Clubs	Intl
Pascal OLMETA	G	07.04.61	Toulon Racing	
Fabien BARTHEZ	G	28.06.71	Toulouse	
Thomas VIDEAU	G	17.11.73		
Manuel AMOROS	D	01.02.62	Monaco	France
Bernard CASONI	D	04.09.61	Racing, Toulon	France
Eric DI MECO	D	07.09.63	Nancy, Martigues	France
Basile BOLI	D	02.01.67	Auxerre	France
Jean-Jacques EYDELIE	D	03.07.66	Tours, Nantes	
Jocelyn ANGLOMA	D	07.08.65	Lille, Paris SG	France
Jean-Christophe MARQUET	D	27.04.74		
Jean-Christophe THOMAS	M	16.10.64	Sochaux	
Jean-Philippe DURAND	M	11.11.66	Toulouse, Bordeaux	France
Didier DESCHAMPS	M	15.10.68	Nantes, Bordeaux	France
Franck SAUZEE	M	28.10.64	Sochaux, Monaco	France
Jean-Marc FERRERI	A	26.12.62	Bordeaux, Auxerre	France
Abedi Ayew PELE	A	05.01.62	Mulhouse, Lille	Ghana
Rudi VOLLER	A	13.04.60	Werder, Roma	Germany
Alen BOKSIC	A	21.01.70	Hajduk Split	Croatia
Igor DOBROVOLSKI	A	02.08.67	Castellon, Servette	USSR-CIS

MILAN SQUAD

PLAYER	P	Birth	Previous Clubs	Intl
Sebastiano ROSSI	G	20.07.64	Cesena	
Francesco ANTONIOLI	G	14.09.68	Cesena, Modena	
Carlos CUDICINI	G	06.09.73		
Franco BARESI	D	08.05.60		Italy
Alessandro COSTACURTA	D	24.04.66		Italy
Filippo GALLI	D	19.05.63	Pescara	
Enzo GAMBARO	D	23.01.66	Cesena, Parma	
Stefano NAVA	D	19.02.66	Reggiana, Parma	
Mauro TASSOTTI	D	19.01.60	Lazio	Italy
Paolo MALDINI	D	26.06.68		Italy
Demetrio ALBERTINI	M	23.08.71	Padova	Italy
Zvonimir BOBAN	M	08.10.68	Dinamo Zagreb, Bari	Croatia
Fernando DE NAPOLI	M	15.09.64	Avellino, Napoli	Italy
Roberto DONADONI	M	09.09.63	Atalanta	Italy
Stefano ERANIO	M	29.12.66	Genoa	Italy
Alberigo EVANI	M	01.01.63		Italy
Ruud GULLIT	M	01.09.62	Feyenoord, PSV	Holland
Frank RIJKAARD	M	30.09.62	Ajax, Zaragoza	Holland
Dejan SAVICEVIC	M	15.09.66	Budunost, Red Star	Yugoslavia
Gianluigi LENTINI	A	27.03.69	Ancona, Torino	Italy
Daniele MASSARO	A	23.05.61	Fiorentina, Roma	
Jean-Pierre PAPIN	A	05.11.63	Bruges, Marseille	France
Aldo SERENA	A	26.06.60	Torino, Juventus, Inter	Italy
Marco SIMONE	A	07.01.65	Como	
Marco VAN BASTEN	A	31.10.64	Ajax	Holland

Also in this issue...

p54 Writing about the debut season of China's professional championship, Zheng Ming commented: "The problems of staging such an event in such a huge country meant that all matches had to be played in one province to save on costs and maximise support." However, the highest attendance for any game was 5,000 when Guangzhou played Dalian. "Incredible though it may seem," says Ming, "only 12 of the 60,000 tickets were sold for the Liaoning v Shanghai game. Eight of those were bought by Yang Yuming, the Liaoning coach."

p6-7 Mark Gleeson reported on the plane crash off the coast of Gabon that killed all of Zambia's national squad, who were flying to a World Cup qualifier in Senegal.

p18 Switzerland coach Roy Hodgson was interviewed by John Moynihan as his team were poised to qualify for the 1994 World Cup in the USA. "In a country normally besotted by ice hockey and skiing, Hodgson has become something of a celebrity," wrote Moynihan. "The Swiss only woke up to the fact that their team had a chance of qualifying after the draw in Italy last October. Hodgson's team were the width of a slice of salami from victory when Arrigo Sacchi's *Azzurri* salvaged a 2-2 draw."

p36-37 Billy Bingham was preparing to stand down as manager of Northern Ireland. His 18-year spell in charge saw the Irish compete in two World Cup finals – in 1982, where they beat the host nation, Spain, and 1986.

10 years ago

North Korea had to play their home World Cup qualifier with Japan on a neutral ground after trouble on and off the field during their previous fixture with Iran. After Nam Song-chol was sent off for pushing the ref, fans had hurled bottles, bricks and broken seats onto the pitch.

20 years ago

Andoni Zubizarreta won his 100th cap for Spain, just four days after playing his 500th match in La Liga. Having surpassed legends Rafael Gordillo (75 caps), Emilio Butragueno (69), Luis Arconada (68) and Michel (66), *World Soccer asked*: "Is he Spain's best ever player?"

30 years ago

A year before Diego Maradona would captain Argentina to World Cup glory, Keir Radnedge said of his 16-year-old brother, Hugo (below right): "His talent burns as brightly for his age. Hugo was the star of Argentina's triumph in the recent South American junior championship."

40 years ago

Leeds United fans rioted at the 1975 European Cup Final in Paris. Ken Goldman gave a detailed account of the trouble, which reached a crescendo when Leeds midfielder Peter Lorimer had a goal disallowed, only for Bayern to break away and take the lead moments later.

50 years ago

With one game still to play, Werder Bremen would need to lose their last game 16-0 for Cologne to stand any chance of retaining their Bundesliga title. In the end, Werder won 3-2 away to Nuremberg, while Cologne could only draw 2-2 at third-place Borussia Dortmund.

TOMORROW'S STARS TODAY

Talentscout

SUCCESSFUL OUT ON LOAN

WORDS: Nick Bidwell

3 THINGS YOU DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT HOJBJERG

- He was born in Copenhagen to a Danish father and French mother.
- Unhappy at a Copenhagen coach's decision to play him out of position up front, he almost quit at 13. A subsequent move to Brondby put him back on track.
- For his first two years in Munich, he lived at the family home of Michael Tarnat, the former German international full-back turned Bayern youth co-ordinator.

Pierre HOJBJERG

Midfielder, 19 (05.08.95)
Augsburg (Ger, on loan from Bayern Munich, Ger) & Denmark

In a sentence

Versatile, dynamic and self-confident Danish international who, after being restricted to a handful of first-team games for Bayern Munich in the first-half of this season, opted for a six-month switch to fellow Bundesliga outfit Augsburg, where he has been firing on all cylinders.

What they say

"We were thrilled when Pierre chose us ahead of several other interested clubs," says Augsburg's general-manager, Stefan Reuter. Augsburg coach Markus Weinzierl adds: "He has shown what a class footballer he is. I'm sure he will have a fantastic future in the game." Bayern director of sport Matthias Sammer insists: "We have just given him a new deal to keep him until 2018 and that's a very clear sign that we intend to build around him."

> "We have just given him a new deal to keep him until 2018 and that's a very clear sign that we intend to build around him"
>
> Bayern Munich director of sport, Matthias Sammer

The story so far

A star turn for Denmark's under-17s, he joined Bayern three years ago and by the end of his first season in Germany he had gone from youth team to reserves to first team, making his senior debut, in April 2013, in a 4-0 victory over Nuremberg. He featured in only seven Bundesliga games last term, but did have a place in Bayern's starting line-up for the 2014 German Cup final victory against Borussia Dortmund. Shortly after arriving at Augsburg he revealed in a Danish press interview that he and Bayern coach Pep Guardiola did not particularly see eye-to-eye and that if the final word exclusively had belonged to Pep, his recent contract extension would not have been forthcoming.

The next step

Given his antipathy towards Guardiola, he might be tempted to put his return to Bayern on hold. Augsburg, who are delighted with his contribution, hope he stays for a further year.

Strengths

His vision, technical ability, range of passing and set-piece delivery are of the highest order, while he has a rare flair for tempo control. Can play as a holder in midfield, out wide, behind the strikers or as a box-to-box runner – which Weinzierl sees as his best position.

Weaknesses

Needs to improve his finishing. Surprisingly hesitant in trying his luck from distance.

Afriyie ACQUAH

Midfielder, 23 (05.01.92) Sampdoria (Ita, on loan from Hoffenheim, Ger) & Ghana
Loan spells in Serie A with Parma and Sampdoria have showcased the central midfielder's mix of power, dynamism, poise and technique. He was in Ghana's squad at the 2014 World Cup and this year's African Nations Cup.

FABINHO

Defender, 21 (23.10.93) Monaco (Fra, on loan from Rio Ave, Por) & Brazil
After two seasons in Monte Carlo, does the polished right-back stay with Monaco, who have an option to sign him permanently, or move on? Quick, enterprising and strong in the tackle, he is sufficiently resilient and gutsy to serve as a ball winner if needed and was recently called up by Brazil coach Dunga.

Jose RODRIGUEZ

Midfielder, 20 (16.12.94) Deportivo La Coruna (on loan from Real Madrid) & Spain
The Spanish under-21 midfielder has been a rare shaft of sunlight in a season of gloom for Depor. Skilful and crisp in his passing, he has had a fine first full season in La Liga and will return to Madrid in July a much more rounded performer.

Marcos LOPES

Midfielder, 19 (28.12.95) Lille (Fra, on loan from Manchester City, Eng) & Portugal
It speaks volumes that despite the Brazilian-born Portugal under-21 playmaker being sidelined for three months last winter with a delicate hamstring, he has still been Lille's most influential player this season. His left-footed artistry, eye for a pass and high-voltage bursts past defenders have brought comparisons with James Rodriguez from Lille coach Rene Girard, who would like to keep him in northern France for an extra season.

Bruno GASPAR

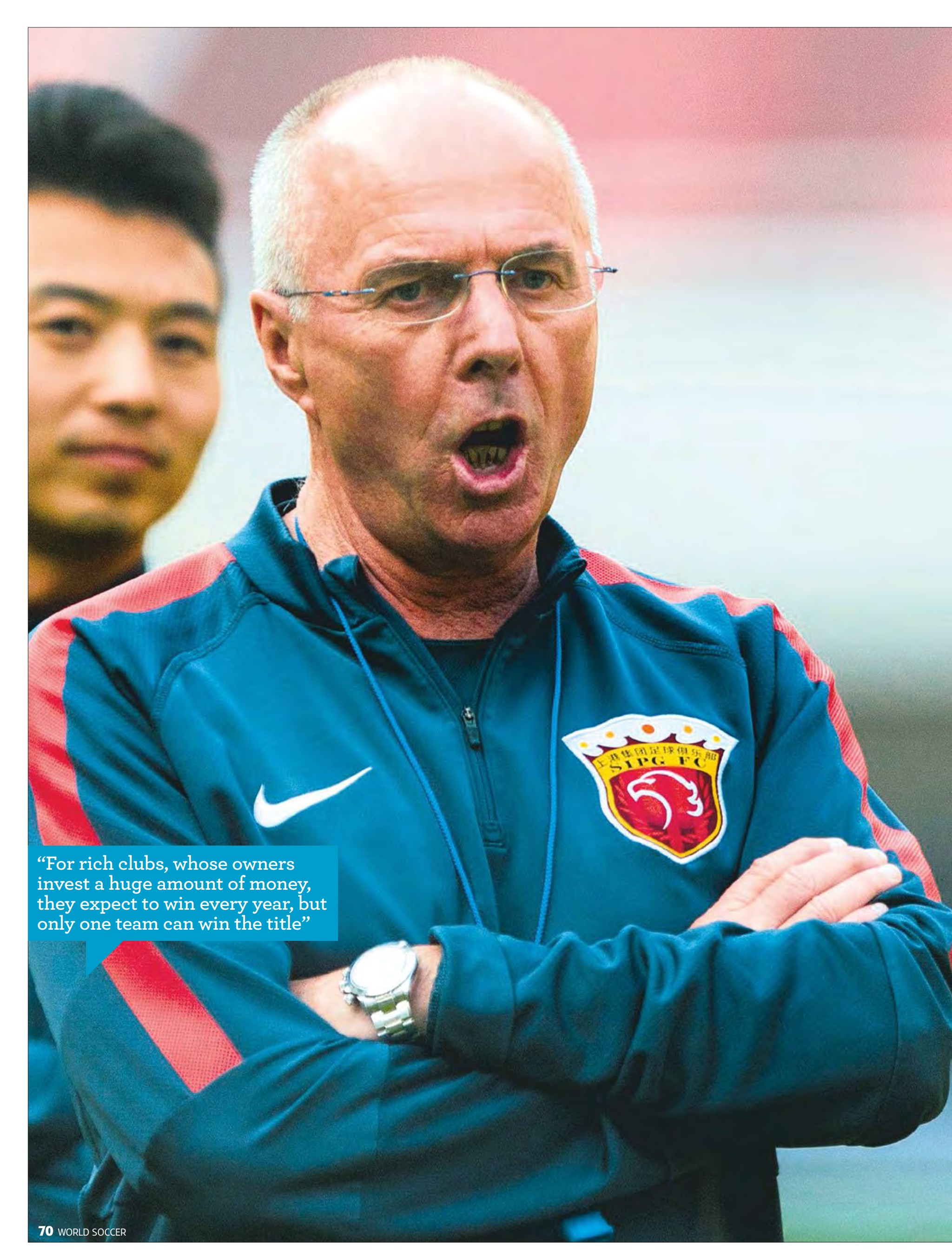
Defender, 22 (21.04.93) Vitoria Guimaraes (on loan from Benfica) & Portugal
Given leave by Benfica to temporarily switch allegiance this term and make his top-flight debut, the right-back has played a key role in Vitoria's impressive push for European qualification. While Vitoria president Julio Mendes has spoken about solidifying the relationship, Benfica hold all the cards with regard to his future. And with long-serving Uruguayan full-back Maxi Pereira apparently heading for the exit, a recall to the Estadio da Luz seems likely.

Nicola LEALI

Goalkeeper, 22 (17.02.93) Cesena (on loan from Juventus) & Italy
Player development, Italian style, is very much based on multiple stints out on loan, and Juve have every reason to be pleased with the progress being made by their under-21 international. Following spells in the second tier with Lanciano and Spezia, he has been starring in Serie A this term, proving himself a wonderful shot-stopper.

Denis SUAREZ

Midfielder, 21 (06.01.94) Sevilla (on loan from Barcelona) & Spain
The decision of the Spain under-21 attacking midfielder to agree a two-year loan to Sevilla last summer was certainly the right move. At long last he is an elite-level regular after three years of reserve football at Manchester City and Barcelona. His touch, imagination and awareness have brought him many admirers – and, at this rate of progress, senior caps look inevitable.



"For rich clubs, whose owners invest a huge amount of money, they expect to win every year, but only one team can win the title"

Facetoface

SVEN GORAN ERIKSSON

"Football is growing in China, getting more and more popular"

The well-travelled Swede – the only coach to win league-and-cup doubles in three different countries – is now in charge of Chinese club Shanghai SIPG

You became Shanghai SIPG's coach in November last year. How are things going?
It is good. We were level with Beijing Guoan at the top of the table after five games, so no complaints there. We had four players, including our two best foreigners missing against Beijing, who had not lost for 21 games, so we were happy to get a [1-1] draw against them.

And on a personal level, how are you enjoying life in China?
Football is growing in China, getting more and more popular, and the quality has been getting better in the past few years. I am happy here.

Why is football now booming in China?
There are two reasons: the bigger clubs have invested a lot of money and the president of China is fully behind football. He said that he wants China to take part in the next World Cup, to host a World Cup and eventually to win the World Cup. That is very ambitious, but it is realistic to talk about China competing at the highest level in the next 10 to 15 years.

What are your biggest challenges as a coach in the country?
Well, you need to find four overseas players who can make a difference, and one of them must be Asian. Then you need to find good Chinese players, which is not easy. There is no history of grass-roots football in China – children play ping-pong or badminton, but they don't play football in schools from the age of six or seven as we do in Europe. They tend to start playing at 12 or 13 so they have missed out on very important formative years. But the situation is getting better and better now that the Chinese government is pushing football, both in schools and in the professional game. Some of the clubs have wealthy owners, or government support, or a bit of both. We at Shanghai are owned by the port authority.

How do Chinese players compare with their European counterparts?
They are getting closer. Some of them could play in Europe – maybe not the Premier League, Bundesliga or La Liga, but certainly in the second divisions in those countries and the top divisions in other countries. I have found Chinese players have a fantastic work ethic and are very easy to motivate. They could not be better in that department. Technically they are often as good as European players, but physically and tactically they are not quite as good. Europeans are ahead because most of the time they have started playing at a younger age. But that may start to change now.

How do you find working with Chinese players? Have you learnt the language?
I have been studying a little but it is a difficult language to learn, so everything is done through translators – and not just for the Chinese players. We also have Spanish speakers so we have translators for them, but I have a good interpreter and the system works well.

In your previous job in China, you took Guangzhou R&F into the Asian Champions League. How does it compare with the UEFA Champions League?
In some ways it is similar; it is prestigious and a chance to play against the top clubs from other countries, but in other ways it is very different. There is nothing like the money that the Champions League in Europe can generate, nor the worldwide coverage. But it is a competition that the top clubs in China all want to be involved in.

Manchester City are one of your former clubs. What do you make of their situation: out of the Champions League in the early stages and hanging on for a top-four place in the Premier League?
With the squad they have, Manchester City should do better. I think they have the best players in the Premier League, so they should be the best team, but they are not. They are out of the Champions League again and will not win the Premier League this year. I don't know what is going wrong because they won the league last year with the same players. It is hard to know what has made the difference this year but with the money they have spent they have to do better.

Do you sympathise with City manager Manuel Pellegrini, who may be out of a job a year after winning the Premier League?
This is football today. I suppose it is not good enough. For rich clubs, whose owners invest a huge amount of money, they expect to win every year, but only one team can win the title.

Yet City were not always competing for the biggest prizes, were they?
No, the year before I was there they were almost relegated. Now they have success and the fans should be happy. But expectations are high, and it is the same at Chelsea. They want their team to win all the time.

Do you still have ambitions to return to management in England?
I was there for many years, but now I am in China and happy here. I have a two-year contract with an option for another year, so I see my future here.

Interview by Gerry Cox

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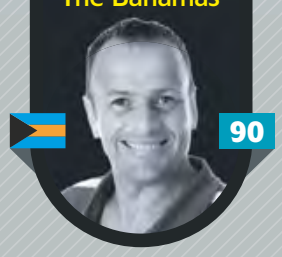

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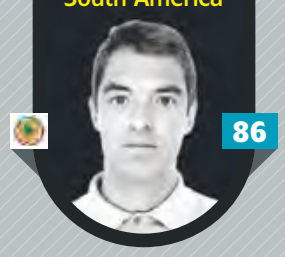

MARK GLEESON
Africa

PLUS

Clash...England (in white) and the USA

PREVIEW

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CLUB FOOTBALL

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Holders...Sevilla are back in the Europa League Final

WOMEN'S WORLD CUP

Canada 2015 represents a new high

Women's game continues to grow

Preview

Warm-up...Japan (in blue) played in Canada late last year

Star...Wambach is a former women's player of the year

FIFA's policy of building up women's football will confront, and almost certainly pass, its most highly visible examination to date when the seventh Women's World Cup kicks off in Canada on June 6. If size is a yardstick, then the test has already been marked positively with 24 competing nations – which is eight more than were in Germany, in 2011, when the hosts were surprised to be left in the quarter-final shadows by Japan's success.

Expansion has opened the gates to newcomers such as Cameroon, Costa Rica, Ivory Coast, Ecuador, Holland, Spain, Switzerland and Thailand, with the Thais benefitting from the extra space made available to Asia by North Korea's ban after five of their players failed dope tests for steroids in 2011.

The worldwide audience will also reach record levels, with a new TV rights deal in Canada with Bell Media, and Fox Sports handling the English language television and radio rights in the United States.

As for Europe, FIFA signed an agreement in December with the European Broadcasting Union for 37 countries to access all 52 matches. In the UK, the BBC will screen every game somewhere within its various different channels and platforms.

Canada 2015 will also shatter social media records for the event – although the continued explosion of this sphere means that each new tournament and event creates a record, so much of the self-indulgent promotional braying is phoney.

That is not, of course, to write down the development success of the women's game. In Europe, a notable game-changer was the huge spotlight on the sport from the 2012 Olympics, when 70,584 fans filled Wembley Stadium to see Great Britain face Brazil in the group stage, and a British and Olympic record 80,203 watched the USA beat Japan 2-1 in the Final.

Canada 2015's local organising committee expect to see

Fixtures

The top two from each group qualify for the knockout stage, along with the four best

GROUP A

06.06.15	Canada v China
06.06.15	New Zealand v Holland
11.06.15	China v Holland
11.06.15	Canada v New Zealand
15.06.15	Holland v Canada
15.06.15	China v New Zealand

GROUP B

07.06.15	Norway v Thailand
07.06.15	Germany v Ivory Coast
11.06.15	Germany v Norway
11.06.15	Ivory Coast v Thailand
15.06.15	Thailand v Germany
15.06.15	Ivory Coast v Norway

Favourites...Germany are ranked no1

GROUP C

08.06.15	Cameroon v Ecuador
08.06.15	Japan v Switzerland
12.06.15	Switzerland v Ecuador
12.06.15	Japan v Cameroon
16.06.15	Ecuador v Japan
16.06.15	Switzerland v Cameroon

GROUP D

08.06.15	Sweden v Nigeria
08.06.15	United States v Australia
12.06.15	Australia v Nigeria
12.06.15	United States v Sweden
16.06.15	Nigeria v United States
16.06.15	Australia v Sweden

Debutants...Cameroon and Ivory Coast

record numbers of event-supporting spectators flooding into the host venues in Vancouver, Edmonton, Winnipeg, Ottawa, Montreal and Moncton. And they have previous in this area, setting an attendance record when hosting the men's 2007 Under-20 World Cup.

The Canadian Football Association will, naturally, use such evidence of organisational efficiency and strong public support when it comes to making a likely bid to host the men's World Cup in 2026.

Thus far, FIFA says ticket sales have been "strong", with individuals now unable to buy tickets for the Final, although some high-price tickets for the opening match, on June 6 between hosts Canada and China, have been slower to shift than expected.

Not that the finals have been without controversy – it would be a rare World Cup which escaped – and this concerns the use of artificial turf for all matches, which went down badly with many of the players. More than 50 of them banded together last year to support a lawsuit in an Ontario tribunal court against FIFA and the Canadian Soccer Association on the grounds of gender discrimination.

Abby Wambach, an American who is a former FIFA Women's World Player of the Year, insisted: "The men would strike playing on artificial turf." Documentation supporting the lawsuit noted that, in 1994, FIFA spent $2million in laying natural grass over artificial turf in New Jersey and Detroit for USA '94.

Ultimately the legal action came too late in the day to create anything more than headlines, while FIFA and the Canadians insisted that climactic conditions would have made it impossible to lay down natural grass pitches able to withstand the rigour of the tournament. In any case, as Tatjana Haenni, FIFA's head of women's competitions, made clear, there was no Plan B.

A resigned Wambach later conceded: "There's nothing we could have done. We tried. We tried the legal route and we filed too late and they were just going to stall until the World Cup was over. What's the point?"

Now her focus will be on trying to claim one of the few prizes missing from her illustrious career.

Despite being at and around the top of the women's game for two decades, and winning four Olympic gold medals, the US have not won the trophy since 1999, on home soil.

Four years ago they finished runners-up in Germany after a dramatic Final. After ending normal time locked at 1-1, the US thought they had won it when Wambach scored in the first period of extra-time – only for Homare Sawa to equalise with three minutes remaining.

Japan went on to win on penalties and become the first Asian winners of the Women's World Cup.

In fact, since the inaugural Women's World Cup tournament was staged in 1991, the competition has seen only three other different winners: USA (1991 and 1999), Norway (1995) and Germany (2003 and 2007).

The Germans are favourites this year as they are ranked number one in the world and are the European champions, having secured their eighth UEFA title in Sweden in 2013. Fellow Europeans France rank third and have a strong club foundation from Lyon.

As for the hosts, Canada will hope that a host nation advantage can lift them beyond their previous best of fourth in 2003.

Sweden, Brazil and England have all targeted winning the tournament outright, but will find it difficult. Sweden and Brazil rely on ageing players, while England have consistently lost their nerve on the world stage, having never progressed beyond the quarter-finals – which they reached in 1995, 2007 and 2011.

At least they need not fear a "Lampard" moment since Hawk-eye will provide the goal-line technology – just one more first for the imminent Women's World Cup.

Keir Radnedge

Pressure...can England make the last four?

third-placed teams

GROUP E

09.06.15	Spain v Costa Rica
09.06.15	Brazil v South Korea
13.06.15	Brazil v Spain
13.06.15	South Korea v Costa Rica
17.06.15	Costa Rica v Brazil
17.06.15	South Korea v Spain

GROUP F

09.06.15	France v England
09.06.15	Colombia v Mexico
13.06.15	France v Colombia
13.06.15	England v Mexico
17.06.15	Mexico v France
17.06.15	England v Colombia

ROUND OF 16
June 20 to 23

QUARTER-FINALS
June 26 & 27

SEMI-FINALS
June 30 & July 1

THIRD-PLACE PLAY-OFF
July 4

FINAL
July 5

UNDER-20 WORLD CUP

Brazil confusion ahead of New Zealand trip

Coach sacked on eve of finals

Brazil, traditionally one of the favourites ahead of the Under-20 World Cup, will go into the 2015 tournament in New Zealand without coach Alexandre Gallo, who was sacked following a poor fourth place at the South American Under-20 Championship in Uruguay. He had also been due to take charge of next year's Olympic team and that responsibility will now fall to Brazil's senior coach, Dunga.

Gallo had made drastic changes to the squad that will now travel to New Zealand under his replacement Rogerio Micale. His list of 26 players included just nine of the players who went to Uruguay in January.

There was no place for Atletico Paranaense's Chelsea-bound midfielder Nathan, who did well at under-17 level but badly in Uruguay. Much more surprising was the absence of Fluminense's Gerson, a left-footed midfielder of undoubted pedigree. His exclusion may have been the final straw for new federation boss Marco Polo Del Nero, and the news of Gallo's sacking was announced at a strange time – late on Friday night, where it was "buried" by the start of the Brazilian championship. On the previous Tuesday, Dunga had held a press conference to announce Brazil's Copa America squad.

Gone...Gallo

Amid the confusion, there were places in Brazil's squad for Manchester United's Belgian-born midfielder Andreas Pereira and Kenedy, the Fluminense forward who has been closely linked with Chelsea.

Argentina, the winners of January's South American Under-20s, will take a strong squad to New Zealand. Coached by Humberto Grondona, son of the late Argentinian FA overlord Julio, the squad contains a number of promising players, including River Plate's Gio Simeone (the son of Atletico Madrid coach Diego), Atletico forward Angel Correa and Real Madrid-bound goalkeeper Augusto Batalla.

In the absence of 2013 champions France, the European challenge is likely to come from Germany and Portugal, the two finalists from the most recent European Under-19 championship. Germany can call upon that competition's top scorer, Davie Selke of Werder Bremen, while Portugal's hopes are pinned on forwards Andre Silva of Porto's B team and Rony Lopes, who has been on loan at Lille from Manchester City.

Mexico have high hopes after winning the CONCACAF under-20 championship, where the goals of striker Hirving Lozano were crucial, while the USA have received clearance from FIFA to include Arsenal midfielder Gedion Zelalem in their squad. The youngster was born in Germany but lived in the US for six years before moving to London.

The Asian challenge will be led by Qatar, the surprise winners of the most recent regional under-19 championship. Their top scorer from that tournament, Ahmed Al Saadi, is one of a number of players who play for the controversial Belgian club Eupen.

Hosts New Zealand are coached by former Watford, Wolves and Walsall defender Darren Bazeley and their squad includes Alex Rufer, son of ex-international Shane and nephew of Wynton.

John Holmesdale

Fixtures

GROUP A

May 30	New Zealand v Ukraine	Auckland
	United States v Myanmar	Whangarei
Jun 2	Myanmar v Ukraine	Whangarei
	New Zealand v United States	Auckland
Jun 5	Myanmar v New Zealand	Wellington
	Ukraine v United States	Auckland

GROUP B

May 30	Argentina v Panama	Wellington
	Ghana v Austria	Wellington
Jun 2	Argentina v Ghana	Wellington
	Austria v Panama	Wellington
Jun 5	Austria v Argentina	Wellington
	Panama v Ghana	Auckland

GROUP C

May 31	Qatar v Colombia	Hamilton
	Portugal v Senegal	Hamilton
Jun 3	Qatar v Portugal	Hamilton
	Senegal v Colombia	Hamilton
Jun 6	Senegal v Qatar	Hamilton
	Colombia v Portugal	Dunedin

GROUP D

May 31	Mexico v Mali	Dunedin
	Uruguay v Serbia	Dunedin
Jun 3	Mexico v Uruguay	Dunedin
	Serbia v Mali	Dunedin
Jun 6	Mali v Uruguay	Hamilton
	Serbia v Mexico	Dunedin

GROUP E

Jun 1	Nigeria v Brazil	New Plymouth
	North Korea v Hungary	New Plymouth
Jun 4	Nigeria v North Korea	New Plymouth
	Hungary v Brazil	New Plymouth
Jun 7	Brazil v North Korea	Christchurch
	Hungary v Nigeria	New Plymouth

GROUP F

Jun 1	Germany v Fiji	Christchurch
	Uzbekistan v Honduras	Christchurch
Jun 4	Germany v Uzbekistan	Christchurch
	Honduras v Fiji	Christchurch
Jun 7	Honduras v Germany	Christchurch
	Fiji v Uzbekistan	Whangarei

Top 2 in each group and the 4 3rd-placed teams with the best record qualify for 1st knockout round

ROUND OF 16

Jun 10	Gp B 1st v Gp A/C/D 3rd	Wellington	37
	Gp D 1st v Gp B/E/F 3rd	Dunedin	38
	Gp A 2nd v Gp C 2nd	Wellington	39
	Gp A 1st v Gp C/D/E 3rd	Auckland	40
Jun 11	Gp B 2nd v Gp F 2nd	Whangarei	42
	Gp F 1st v Gp E 2nd	Christchurch	41
	Gp C 1st v Gp A/B/F 3rd	Hamilton	43
	Gp E 1st v Gp D 2nd	New Plymouth	44

QUARTER-FINALS

Jun 14	44 winner v 43 winner	Hamilton	45
	37 winner v 41 winner	Christchurch	46
	39 winner v 38 winner	Auckland	47
	42 winner v 40 winner	Wellington	48

SEMI-FINALS

Jun 17	45 winner v 48 winner	Christchurch
	47 winner v 46 winner	Auckland

THIRD-PLACE PLAY-OFF

Jun 20	Auckland

FINAL

Jun 20	Auckland

EUROPA LEAGUE FINAL

Sevilla eye the big prize

Winners set for Champions League entry

Twelve months ago, when Unai Emery's Sevilla overcame Benfica on penalties in the Europa League Final in Turin, the coach could have been forgiven for casting an envious eye towards the riches that were on offer in the Champions League. Yet Emery has had no regrets about spending this season toiling in the Europa League; not least because the winners this term will enjoy a passage to next season's Champions League.

"We care about this competition more than anyone," said Emery after watching his side beat Fiorentina in the semi-finals to set up a Final clash with Dnipro in Warsaw on May 27. "I'm tremendously happy with the work of this group. For all they have given to this competition. Now we'll enjoy this moment and think about the Final."

Sevilla's form, particularly at home, has been exemplary. A recent league loss to Real Madrid ended a 35-match unbeaten run at Sanchez Pizjuan stadium that stretched back to March last year. In the Europa League knockout stage, there were victories over Fiorentina, Zenit, Villarreal and Borussia Monchengladbach, with only one loss, to Feyenoord, in the group stage.

Emery may have lost Ivan Rakitic, the star of last year's Final, to Barcelona, but Colombian striker Carlos Bacca has been in exceptional form and Polish midfielder Grzegorz Krychowiak is earning envious looks from some of Europe's leading sides. French forward Kevin Gameiro has revived his career in Andalucia after running aground at Paris Saint-Germain, while Jose Antonio Reyes, now 31, is enjoying life back at his first club.

Sevilla will travel to Poland as favourites and a win would give them their fourth triumph in the competition, after back-to-back wins in the 2006 and 2007 UEFA Cup Finals and last year's victory over Benfica.

In contrast, Dnipro will be taking part in their first European final following an incredible run in this season's competition. The sequence of victories – over the likes of Napoli, Club Brugge, Ajax and Olympiakos – has been all the more remarkable because they have been forced to play their home games in Kiev, 450km from their home, because of the ongoing violence in the east of Ukraine.

Trouble...Dnipro face disciplinary proceedings

At times during the campaign, coach Myron Markevych has complained about the lack of support in Kiev's Olympic stadium, with fans of local powerhouse Dynamo preferring to stay away and watch their own team's exploits in the competition – Dynamo reached the quarter-finals – on TV. There was a full house for the semi-final against Napoli, but UEFA has since launched disciplinary proceedings against Dnipro after fans let off fireworks and invaded the pitch following their side's victory.

Dnipro must also face a charge of racist behaviour, which is believed to refer to a banner that featured a symbol used by the Azov Battalion, a fighting unit involved in the conflict in eastern Ukraine and with links to far-right groups.

> "We care about this competition more than anyone"
> Sevilla coach Unai Emery

Markevych has been the unsung hero of the campaign. He enjoyed a prolonged period of success with Metallist Kharkiv, although he never broke the duopoly of Dynamo Kiev and Shakhtar Donetsk, before joining Dnipro last summer after Spaniard Juande Ramos – who was the coach of Sevilla when they won the competition in 2006 and 2007 – moved his family back to Spain as the violence intensified.

Markevych has masterfully guided a squad composed of mostly homegrown players, including national-team winger Yevhen Konoplyanka, who was close to joining Liverpool in January 2014. Brazilian centre-back Douglas has been a key figure in defence while Ukraine international Ruslan Rotan has brought his experience to bear in midfield.

Progress has often been by the finest of margins, with Dnipro scoring just 15 times in 16 matches on their way to the Final. Markevych's defence-minded tactics have instead concentrated on heavy pressing to close down space and hamper their opponents all over the pitch.

Dnipro will be expected to continue this safety-first approach in Warsaw against an attack-minded Sevilla side. And whoever wins, they will not be around to defend their trophy next season.

John Holmesdale

On form...Bacca (centre) opened the scoring for Sevilla in their semi-final home leg against Fiorentina

APRIL 16-MAY 13, 2015

Global diary

A comprehensive record of recent events around the world

Agony...Federici can't stop Alexis Sanchez's shot from slipping through his hands as Arsenal beat Reading in their FA Cup semi-final

Thursday *April 16*

ARGENTINA: Boca Juniors beat Palestino of Chile 2-0 to end their Libertadores group with a 100 per cent record and set up a last-16 clash with arch-rivals River Plate.
BRAZIL: Marco Polo del Nero, who is a member of FIFA's ExCo, replaces Jose Maria Marin as president of the Brazilian Football Confederation.
FRANCE: Ligue 1 president Frederic Thiriez announces that goal-line technology will be used in the French top flight from next season.
ITALY: Parma are deducted four points for a breach of financial regulations, having been penalised three points earlier in the season. In the Europa League, Napoli win 4-1 at Wolfsburg, while Fiorentina draw 1-1 away to Dynamo Kiev thanks to a last-minute equaliser from substitute Khouma Babacar.
QATAR: The Qatar Stars League season finishes with Lekhwiya, under coach Michael Laudrup, claiming their fourth title in five years.
ROMANIA: Just 24 hours after he was sacked, Ze Maria is reappointed coach of Ceahlaul Piatra Neamt after the owner, Angelo Massone, seeks the advice of his players.

Friday *April 17*

FRANCE: Marseille's hopes of qualifying for the Champions League take another dent as they lose a third consecutive league game, going down 1-0 at Nantes.
GERMANY: Bayern Munich doctor Hans-Wilhelm Muller-Wohlfahrt resigns after 38 years in the role, claiming the club's medical department was blamed for the Champions League defeat by Porto.
MALAYSIA: National champions Johor Darul Ta'zim sack goalkeeper Mohd Anis Faron for swearing at a policeman while playing for the club's development side.
SPAIN: Levante draw 2-2 at home to Espanyol to move out of the bottom three and send Almeria into the relegation zone.
UAE: Al Jazira lose 4-2 at home to Bani Yas, handing the Arabian Gulf League title to Al Ain for a record-extending 12th time.

Saturday *April 18*

ARGENTINA: River Plate move clear at the top of the table by beating Banfield 4-1 as San Lorenzo lose 1-0 at Aldosivi.
ENGLAND: A howler from Reading keeper Adam Federici hands Arsenal a 2-1 win and a competition-record 19th FA Cup Final appearance.
HOLLAND: PSV beat Heerenveen 4-1 to win their first Eredivisie title since 2008 and their 22nd overall.
INDONESIA: The government suspends the country's official football association, the PSSI, after it refuses to exclude two clubs from the Indonesian Super League due to ownership disputes. Despite warnings from FIFA against interference, the government says it will set up a transitional management body to take over from the PSSI.
ITALY: Second-place Lazio's run of six straight wins ends with a 2-0 defeat at leaders Juventus.
MALTA: Unbeaten in 30 league games this season, Hibernians wrap up the championship with a 3-1 win against Floriana.
NORTHERN IRELAND: Crusaders end an 18-year wait for the league title with a 2-0 win against Glentoran.
SPAIN: Lionel Messi scores his 400th career goal for Barcelona in a 2-0 win over fourth-placed Valencia.

Sunday *April 19*

ALGERIA: Title holders ES Setif draw 2-2 in Morocco against Raja Casablanca to keep alive hopes of an historic three teams from one country making the group stage of the CAF Champions League, after MC El Eulma and USM Alger beat Tunisia's CS Sfaxien (1-0) and Guinea's AS Kaloum (2-1) respectively in the first legs of their final qualifying games.
ARGENTINA: Boca Juniors hit back after conceding a first-minute goal at Lanus to win 3-1 and move ahead of River Plate at the top of the league on goal difference.
ENGLAND: Steven Gerrard will not be spending his 35th birthday at Wembley after Liverpool lose 2-1 to Aston Villa in their FA Cup semi-final.
FRANCE: Lyon return to the top of Ligue 1 with a 2-2 draw in the Rhone Valley derby against Saint-Etienne.
GERMANY: Hamburg suffer a fifth successive defeat, losing 1-0 to

Champions...PSV win the Eredivisie

On the up...Werder Bremen (in green)

Werder Bremen, who have gone from last place in December to being four points adrift of a Europa League spot.

GREECE: Oympiakos win the league title as Panathinaikos lose 2-1 at Panthrakikos. They have now won five successive championships, and 17 in the last 19 years.

HOLLAND: Go Ahead Eagles' shock 1-0 win at Feyenoord sees Dordrecht relegated.

ITALY: Both sides have a goal disallowed as Internazionale and Milan draw 0-0 in the *Derby della Madonnina*. Roma miss their chance to reclaim second place from city rivals Lazio as they are held to a 1-1 draw by Atalanta.

SCOTLAND: Inverness Caledonian Thistle beat Celtic 3-2 to reach their first-ever Scottish Cup Final, where they will face Falkirk, who knocked out Hibernian on Saturday.

Monday *April 20*

GERMANY: Hanover sack coach Tayfun Korkut two days after a 4-0 defeat by Bayer Leverkusen made it 13 games without a win and left ➤

SPAIN

SID LOWE

Forward looking... new TV laws have been passed

Row over new TV deal

Strike off but the battle has just begun

It was heralded as the panacea to all of Spanish football's ills, the start of a bright new era – and it may yet prove to be just that – but the initial consequence could not have been more different. Instead of peace and equality, Spanish football's new TV deal brought a strike that threatened the final two weeks of the season.

In the end, the strike failed, postponed by a judge pending a full hearing in June, but things will probably never be the same again.

From the start of the 2016-2017 season, TV rights will be sold collectively and centrally in Spain, with the aim of reducing the huge disparities earned by the country's clubs in a deregulated system in which each negotiated its own deal.

The idea is that, at most, the difference between the highest earning club and the lowest will be no greater than 4.5 to 1, with the hope that it will drop as low as 3.5 to 1. Currently, the gap is greater than 10 to 1. Of the money made, 90 per cent will go to first division clubs and 10 per cent to second division clubs. Of that 90 per cent, half will be distributed equally, while the other half will be distributed according to results over the last five years and "social significance", defined by membership, ticket sales, TV audience, etc.

Madrid and Barcelona are beneficiaries, though, as the law enshrines their power. They will be protected for the first six years covered by the law – in other words, the first two TV deals – with their current income guaranteed even if the overall amount drops. They will also be the only clubs ever-present in the body set up to control and manage the TV deal, making up two of the six members.

That last point underlines that this law is about more than just the TV rights that provide the fundamental source of income for the game. Drawn up by the government in collaboration with the league, the LFP, it deals with a whole series of structural issues in the game and could be seen almost as a new constitution for Spanish football. It could also be seen as something of a palace coup, tilting the balance away from the Federation and towards the government and the LFP.

The strike called by the players' union, the AFE, was backed by the Football Federation, the RFEF, as both felt ignored in the construction of the law and had seen their influence reduced. By threatening to strike, the AFE did at least succeed in addressing its greatest complaint: that it had simply not been listened to. But it has been effectively cut out of the distribution of funds and is not directly represented in the decree.

The RFEF, meanwhile, complained of "continued interference" from the government, a reduction in the money it will receive from the football pools and the fact that money generated by football will be channelled into other sports, at the discretion of the government. It had threatened that FIFA may intervene against what it defines as "political interference". The RFEF's status as formal rights holders had been removed. Therein lies the key point of conflict.

The president of the Federation, Angel Maria Villar, and the president of the league, Javier Tebas, have been in open conflict for some time. With the strike postponed by a judge, Tebas has emerged as the undisputed winner. Backed by the law, the league and the government are stronger now.

In theory, the league's hand should be strengthened when it comes to negotiating TV deals, providing a more rational structure and greater equality. There may, however, be more challenges ahead. WS

➤ them just two points from the relegation play-off spot in 15th place.
MOROCCO: Players from top-flight side Chabab Atlas Khenifra are among the 29 people injured, many of them seriously, as their team bus is involved in a head-on collision with a van as they travel home from a game against Chabab Rif Al Hoceima.
RWANDA: This year's CECAFA Cup, a regional tournament for countries from eastern and central Africa, is to be staged in Rwanda, who will use the event to help them prepare for the hosting of next year's African Nations Championship.
TURKEY: At the end of the weekend on which the Super Lig resumes after a one-week suspension in the wake of an attack on Fenerbahce's team bus, Fener go top of the table with a 1-0 win at home to Bursaspor.

Tuesday *April 21*

BRAZIL: Cruzeiro take top spot in their Libertadores Cup group with a 2-0 win over Bolivia's Universitario, who also go through to the knockout stage after Huracan of Argentina lose 3-0 to Venezuelan side Mineros.
CHINA: Guangzhou Evergrande make sure of top spot in Group H in the AFC Champions League with a game to spare, as they draw 0-0 away to Seoul.
COLOMBIA: Atletico Nacional qualify for the Libertadores knockout phase with a 4-0 thrashing of Paraguayan side Libertad. The result allows Estudiantes of Argentina to take second place with a 2-0 win against Barcelona of Ecuador.
GERMANY: Trailing 3-1 from the away leg in Portugal, Bayern Munich thrash Porto 6-1 in the return to reach the semi-finals of the Champions League.
ITALY: Zdenek Zeman steps down as Cagliari coach just a month after returning for his second spell of the season with the Serie A strugglers.
LIECHTENSTEIN: Triesenberg beat Vaduz's under-23 side 1-0 – which means every club registered with the Liechtenstein FA has now made it to the Cup Final at least once.
SAUDI ARABIA: Runners-up last year, Al Hilal reach the knockout stage of the AFC Champions League for a seventh consecutive season with a 2-1 win in Uzbekistan against Lokomotiv Tashkent.
SOUTH KOREA: Second-half goals from substitutes Ko Cha-won and Kaio see Suwon Bluewings come from behind to beat Japan's Urawa Red Diamonds 2-1 and qualify for the knockout stage of the AFC Champions League.
SPAIN: Neymar scores twice in the opening 34 minutes as Barcelona beat Paris Saint-Germain 2-0 to win 5-1 on aggregate in the Champions League quarter-finals.

Wednesday *April 22*

ARGENTINA: Reigning champions San Lorenzo are knocked out of the Libertadores Cup with a 1-0 defeat at home to Uruguay's Danubio.
BRAZIL: Atletico Mineiro, the 2013 Libertadores champions, claim their place in this year's last 16 with a 2-0 victory over Colo Colo. Three players are sent off as Sao Paulo beat Corinthians 2-0 to secure their place in the knockout stage and Internacional's 1-0 win against The Strongest sees all five Brazilian sides progress from the group stage.
HONG KONG: Kitchee win the Hong Kong League Cup, beating South China 4-0 in the Final.
ITALY: A goalless draw in Monaco sees Juventus progress to the last four of the Champions League for the first time since 2003.
JAPAN: After scoring three first-half goals, Kashiwa Reysol hold on to beat South Korea's Jeonbuk Hyundai Motors 3-2 and qualify for the last 16 of the AFC Champions League with a game to spare.

Through...Kashiwa Reysol (in yellow)

MEXICO: Second-half sub Oribe Peralta scores a late equaliser as America grab a 1-1 draw at home to Montreal Impact in the first leg of the CONCACAF Champions League Final. Puebla will face Santos Laguna in the Supercopa MX after beating Guadalajara 4-2 in the Final of the clausura Copa MX.
SOUTH AFRICA: Kaizer Chiefs clinch the South African Premiership title with a 4-1 victory over Polokwane City.
SPAIN: At the eighth time of asking this season, Real Madrid beat rivals Atletico 1-0 to reach the semi-finals of the Champions League.

Thursday *April 23*

ENGLAND: Sunderland winger Adam Johnson is charged with three counts of sexual activity with a 15-year-old girl and one offence of ➤

Support...Sochaux supporters at a Ligue 2 match against Creteil

FRANCE

HOWARD JOHNSON

Saviour from the east?

Chinese takeover at second-tier side Sochaux

The news that Sochaux are to be sold to Chinese electrical company Tech Pro Technology Development for €7million will come as no surprise to the club's supporters. After all, rumours had been circulating for a year that carmakers Peugeot, the club's long-term owners and benefactors, wanted to cut all ties.

However, the sale is still something that fans of Football Club Sochaux-Montbeliard will find hard to swallow. This, after all, is a club that has been joined at the hip to Peugeot since day one, when family member and company director Jean-Pierre Peugeot founded it back in 1928.

However, relegation from Ligue 1 at the end of last season – after an unbroken run of 66 years in the French top flight – coupled with tougher conditions in the car-manufacturing business, convinced the iconic company the time was right to get out.

For many people, especially those in the Franche-Comte region in the east of the country where the club is situated, the separation of Sochaux and Peugeot had been simply unthinkable. Sochaux have always played in the blue and yellow colours associated with Peugeot, and the company's instantly recognisable lion crest has also served as the football club's badge for as long as anyone can remember.

> "I want to do everything I can to help Sochaux climb out of Ligue 2 and back into Ligue 1"
>
> Li Wing-sang, on behalf of the club's new investors

But with a deficit of €17.6m to deal with after relegation in 2014, Sochaux's benefactor opted to look for an escape route.

It's too early to say what this will mean for the future of the club from a sporting perspective. But what is certain is that the new owners will have to work hard if they are to retain the special bond that exists between the club and the region's working classes. With 10,000 people working for Peugeot at its nearby headquarters, and with numerous car-business suppliers also present in the area, the new owners will need to be mindful that Sochaux is one of a tiny minority of professional football clubs that still retains important ties with the public that originally formed its core support.

Current Sochaux president Laurent Pernet is himself a long-term member of Peugeot's senior management team, having been with the company for 25 years.

"There will always be a really close tie between Peugeot and Sochaux," says Pernet. "Lots of Peugeot employees are supporters, so it's in the interests of the future owners to retain this connection."

Li Wing-sang, the CEO of Tech Pro Technology Development's parent company Ledus, has been quick to talk the talk, saying that he is "very aware of the history of this club" and wants "to retain its unique culture".

Li has been seen at several Sochaux games since serious negotiations got under way around February and says: "I want to take my time to understand everything about the club, especially its management structures. And I want to do everything I can to help Sochaux climb out of Ligue 2 and back into Ligue 1."

Sochaux has traditionally been one of the most fertile breeding grounds for young French talent. The club's academy has produced a number of French internationals in recent times, including Benoit Pedretti, Jeremy Menez and Marvin Martin.

But things have not been easy for the current first team under coach Olivier Echouafni. He has called the Chinese takeover a "little revolution", but it remains to be seen whether the new owners will be putting substantial funds at his disposal.

The €7m they have put on the table to buy the club is small potatoes for a company that is listed on the Hong Kong stock exchange and has a market cap worth billions of HK dollars, so there is money available should the new owners decide to get the chequebook out.

And as we all know, the reaction of any club's loyal supporters to a takeover will be dictated by one thing only: what happens on the pitch. WS

Hopeful...Li Wing-sang plans a Sochaux renaissance

➤ grooming. The 27-year-old was initially arrested on March 2.
ITALY: Fiorentina and Napoli reach the semi-finals of the Europa League, beating Dynamo Kiev and Wolfsburg respectively.
SCOTLAND: Inverness Caledonian Thistle defender Josh Meekings is cleared to play in the Scottish Cup Final after calls for a retrospective ban for handling a goal-bound header in the semi-final win over Celtic are dismissed.
SPAIN: Kevin Gameiro scores four minutes from time as holders Sevilla draw 2-2 away to Zenit to win 4-3 on aggregate and progress to the last four of the Europa League.
UKRAINE: Dnipro win 1-0 to reach the semi-finals of a European tournament for the first time and end Club Brugge's record as the first team to go 11 games unbeaten from the start of the group stage in the Europa League.

Friday *April 24*

FRANCE: Former Marseille striker Jordan Ayew scores twice against his old club as Lorient win 5-3 away from home and move out of the relegation places.
RUSSIA: Ufa score twice in injury time to beat Kuban Krasnodor 3-2 and move out of the drop zone.
SCOTLAND: Hamilton Academical's player-manager Martin Canning gets his first Premiership win since being appointed on January 23 with a 2-0 victory over Motherwell.
TANZANIA: Young Africans beat Ruvu Shooting 5-0 to extend their national record with a 20th league championship.

Saturday *April 25*

CHINA: Tim Cahill scores his first goal for Shanghai Shenhua, in a 2-0 win against Hangzhou Greentown.
ENGLAND: Watford are promoted to the Premier League after Norwich City and Middlesbrough fail to win in the Championship. Steven Gerrard makes his 500th league appearance for Liverpool in a 0-0 draw at West Bromwich Albion.
FRANCE: Paris Saint-Germain record their biggest league win since April 2012 with a 6-1 thrashing of Lille at the Parc des Princes.
GERMANY: Hamburg end a run of six games without scoring as they beat Augsburg 3-2 to move off the bottom of the table. Michael Frontzeck's debut as Hanover coach ends in defeat as his side lose 2-1 at home to Hoffenheim.
SERBIA: The start of the Belgrade derby between arch-rivals Red Star and Partizan is delayed for 45 ➤

AFRICA

MARK GLEESON

Algerian trio drawn together

Tough for Champions League holders

Holders ES Setif sneaked through to the group phase of the African Champions League on penalties, but they have lost their coach to fatigue and been drawn with two of their compatriots in an historic first for the competition.

The Algerian club looked to be comfortably on course after a 2-2 away draw in the first leg of their third-round match with Raja Casablanca from neighbouring Morocco and then leading 2-0 at home in the return. But they conceded two late goals to set up a dramatic penalty shoot-out in which they emerged victorious to squeeze through in defence of their title.

Through... ES Setif celebrate

Over...Madoui cited fatigue as a reason to quit the defending champions

It was all too much for Kheireddine Madoui, who last year, at the age of 37, became the youngest coach to win the tournament since the group format was introduced in 1997. Madoui announced his resignation on the grounds of both mental and physical fatigue.

> **"I don't want to be held responsible for the team's general problems"**
> ES Setif coach Khereiddine Madoui steps down

Setif, whose success last year kept up the increasing rise back to prominence of Algerian football, have been joined in the same group by two other clubs from the north African country in a first in Champions League history. Compatriots USM Alger and MC Eulma will compete alongside Setif in Group B, with Al Merreikh of Sudan completing the numbers.

Only Africa's best 12 performing countries – determined by an index of results over the last five years in the continent's two club competitions – are allowed two representatives in the annual Champions League, but because Setif won the competition last year, Algeria had a rare entry of three.

The trio all made it past the three preliminary rounds in order to qualify for the last eight, which is where the group phase begins.

Eulma, who are in relegation danger in their domestic league, are debutants at this stage, while USM Alger have been in the group phase on three previous occasions.

The three Algerian clubs are part of seven from the

Arabic-speaking north of the continent, keeping up the long standing dominance of clubs from the region.

However, it is TP Mazembe Englebert of the Democratic Republic of Congo, who are the marginal favourites this year. They have a record of consistency in the competition and could count themselves most unfortunate to lose out to Setif in last year's semi-finals.

Mazembe are drawn in Group A alongside Smouha of Egypt, Moghreb Tetouan from Morocco and Sudan's Al Hilal.

The group phase begins in late June, on a home-and-away basis, with the top two in each group advancing to September and October's semi-finals, to be played over two legs.

The Final, in October and November, is also over two legs. **WS**

CHIEFS CROWNED AGAIN

Kaizer Chiefs are champions of South Africa once more, securing the Premier Division with three games to spare, with last year's winners Mamelodi Sundowns finishing second.

Soweto-based Chiefs ended up 12 points clear, losing just three times and conceding only 14 goals.

"We started the league season brilliantly, going on a fantastic 19-game unbeaten run," said coach Stuart Baxter, whose side set a record by winning 21 of their 30 games.

"At the beginning of the year we gave our nearest chasers Mamelodi Sundowns a bit of hope by dropping points. But just when Sundowns got a sniff, the guys picked themselves up, winning five matches on the trot towards the end of the season."

South African champs...Kaizer Chiefs

• *For final league table, see page 96.*

➤ minutes because of crowd trouble. The game, which is also held up for several minutes in the second half to allow smoke to clear, ends 0-0.

SPAIN: Xavi becomes only the eighth player to play 500 games in La Liga as he comes on as a sub in Barcelona's 2-0 victory at Espanyol. Antoine Griezmann's two goals in Atletico Madrid's 3-0 win over Elche take him to 22 league goals for the season – a record for a Frenchman in a single Liga season.

Sunday *April 26*

AUSTRALIA: Melbourne Victory secure the A-League Premiers' Plate with a 3-1 home triumph over Central Coast Mariners.

CHILE: Cobresal are crowned national champions for the first time in their history as a 3-2 victory over Barnechea wraps up the clausura title with a game to spare.

ENGLAND: Chelsea's Eden Hazard is named PFA Player of the Year. Harry Kane of Tottenham Hotspur wins the young player's award.

FRANCE: Lyon return to the top of Ligue 1 with a 4-2 win at Reims.

GERMANY: Bayern Munich, who beat Hertha Berlin 1-0 on Saturday, are crowned Bundesliga champions for a third successive season as Wolfsburg lose 1-0 to Borussia Monchengladbach.

HOLLAND: Kolbeinn Sigthorsson's late goal earns Ajax a 1-1 draw at PEC Zwolle and ensures they will finish runners-up in the Eredivisie and take the country's final Champions League spot.

ITALY: Torino beat Juventus 2-1 to win the Turin derby for the first time in 20 years.

NEW ZEALAND: Auckland City are champions of Oceania for a fifth successive season, beating Team Wellington on penalties in the OFC Champions League Final.

PERU: Cesar Vallejo are Copa Inca champions, coming from behind to beat Alianza Lima 3-1 in the Final.

PORTUGAL: Benfica draw 0-0 at home to second-place Porto to remain three points clear at the top of the table. It is the first time they have failed to score in a home league game since 2009.

SOUTH KOREA: The top flight's longest-ever unbeaten run comes to an end, after 22 games, as Jeonbuk Motors lose 2-1 at Jeonnam Dragons.

Monday *April 27*

BELGIUM: Lokeren defender Gregory Mertens, 24, suffers a suspected cardiac arrest during a reserve-team game against Genk.

ENGLAND: Barring defeat on the ➤

➤ last day of the season and a 19-goal swing, Bournemouth go up to the Premier League with a 3-0 win at home to Bolton. Chelsea beat Manchester City 5-2 on aggregate to retain the FA Youth Cup.
ICELAND: Nineteen-year-old Thorhallur Knutsson scores the only goal of the game as last year's title winners Stjarnan beat cup holders KR 1-0 in the Icelandic Super Cup.
ITALY: Atalanta striker German Denis is banned for five games after he burst into the dressing room of opponents Empoli on Sunday and punched defender Lorenzo Tonelli.
SPAIN: Valencia go back up to fourth in La Liga with a 4-0 victory over relegation-threatened Granada.
TURKEY: Besiktas return to the top of the league on goal difference as Cenk Tosun's 96th-minute goal gives them a 2-1 victory over Karabukspor.

Tuesday *April 28*

FRANCE: Paris Saint-Germain open up a three-point lead at the top of the table with a 3-1 win over relegation-threatened Metz.
GERMANY: Bayern Munich's hopes of a domestic double end as they lose a penalty shoot-out to Borussia Dortmund in the semi-finals of the German Cup. They miss all four spot-kicks – the first time they have ever failed to succeed with any of their attempts in a shoot-out.
ITALY: A goalless draw at home to Bari sees Carpi promoted to Serie A for the first time in their history.
MEXICO: Tigres come from a goal down to beat Universitario 2-1 in Bolivia in the first leg of their Libertadores Cup last-16 game.
SPAIN: Lionel Messi, Luis Suarez

Too strong...PSG (in blue) beat Metz

LIBERTADORES CUP

TIM VICKERY

Knockout stage highlights the north-south divide

Brazil and Argentina giants facing a shootout

The Libertadores Cup may miss a marketing trick by not staging a draw ceremony for its knockout stage, but the fact is there is simply no time for such fripperies as South America's premier club competition is squeezed into the first half of the year.

Throw in the distances and difficulties of travel around the continent – not to mention the huge journey up to Mexico – and it becomes apparent why the Libertadores does things differently.

The clashes in the knockout stage are dictated by the performances of the teams in the group stage – not just in the second round, but all the way to the Final. One alteration to the schedule is possible; if two teams from the same country make it through to the last four, they will automatically meet in the semi-finals. That eventuality aside, the 16 remaining teams have already effectively been separated into two halves – and the difference between the two is fascinating.

In the late 1990s, the second half of the South American club year was devoted to two competitions: the Mercosul, for those in the south, and the Merconorte for the north. That separation has now re-emerged.

One half of the competition is entirely comprised of teams from the south: Boca Juniors, River Plate and Racing from Argentina, Cruzeiro, Sao Paulo and Corinthians from Brazil, Guarani from Paraguay, and Wanderers from Uruguay.

The big absentees are San Lorenzo, last year's winners, who surprisingly lost their final group game 1-0 to bottom team Danubio of Uruguay – allowing Corinthians and Sao Paulo to progress.

The other half of the draw contains a trio of southern intruders – Estudiantes and the Brazilian pair of Internacional and Atletico Mineiro – but the rest are all from the north: the Colombian duo of Santa Fe and Atletico Nacional, Emelec of Ecuador, Universitario de Sucre of Bolivia and Tigres of Mexico.

This adds a fair bit of spice to what is already turning into an intriguing version of South America's premier club competition.

The south has a near monopoly on the title – the only time in the last decade that the trophy went north is in 2008, when LDU of Ecuador were shock winners. In this 10-year period the only other finalist from the north was Guadalajara of Mexico in 2010. All the other Finals have been all-southern affairs.

The giants from Brazil and Argentina are looking strong this year, but they will now start eliminating each other, and as well as the headline-grabbing Boca-River clash, there are two all-Brazilian ties in the last 16.

There is, then, a glimmer of hope that a serious northern challenger will emerge – Tigres, perhaps, or one of the Colombians, both of whom were impressive in the group stage. The progress of a solid and attractive side from the north all the way to the Final would bring a welcome touch of variety to the competition.

Atletico Mineiro's defeat of Colo Colo in the group stage meant that, along with Peru and Venezuela, there is no representation from Chile in the last 16. In the case of the other two countries, this is not a total surprise, but for Chilean football this is very disappointing, especially as similar wipeouts occurred in 2013 and 2008.

The game in Chile has been through a financial restructuring, investments in stadiums have taken place and the national team is widely seen as the country's best ever. However, the club sides are not punching this new weight at continental level.

There has been one recent exception – Universidad de Chile, who reached the semi-finals in 2010 and, in exhilarating style under Jorge Sampaoli, in 2012 as well. Since then, though, "la U" have suffered three consecutive first-round exits and this year's, with five defeats in six games, was especially embarrassing. Moreover, the club have been specialising in signing players who have been shining with other Chilean sides but have failed to show the same level of performance with their new club – a development which has weakened the league without strengthening Universidad de Chile. WS

"What will be, will be"

River Plate coach Marcelo Gallardo looks forward to another clasico with Boca Juniors

Battle...Universitario de Sucre (red) v Tigres

and Neymar all score in Barcelona's 6-0 win against Getafe to take the trio's goal count in all competitions past 100 for the season. Athletic Bilbao and Real Sociedad draw 0-0 in the Basque derby.

Wednesday *April 29*

ENGLAND: Former Premier League player Delroy Facey, whose previous clubs include Bolton Wanderers, is jailed for two-and-a-half years for attempting to help fix matches. Chelsea win 3-1 at Leicester City to deny the hosts a fifth straight win in the top flight for the first time in over 50 years.

GERMANY: Wolfsburg beat Arminia Bielefeld 4-0 to deny the third-tier leaders a first-ever German Cup Final appearance.

ITALY: Parma are relegated after losing 4-0 at Lazio, who stay in second place, behind Juventus, who beat Fiorentina 3-2.

MEXICO: Having drawn 1-1 in their home leg, Club America overturn a half-time deficit in Canada to beat Montreal Impact 4-2 in the return and win the CONCACAF Champions League Final.

On target...Club America's Oribe Peralta

ROMANIA: Targu Mures, who have never won the national title, leapfrog Steaua Bucharest at the top of the table with a 1-0 win away to the defending champions. Ninth-place Pandurii Targu Jiu suspend their president Eugen Pirvulescu over an investigation into match fixing.

Thursday *April 30*

BELGIUM: Gregory Mertens of Lokeren dies in hospital, three days after collapsing during a game.

ITALY: Napoli lose 4-2 away to ➤

Second best...San Lorenzo's Mauro Matos loses out to Danubio defender Fabricio Formiliano

CONTINENTAL WINNERS

● BOLIVIA
Apertura winners Bolivar added the clausura title to their haul, giving them a record 24th national championship. They finished the season four points clear of second-place The Strongest.

● CHILE
Cobresal were crowned champions of Chile for the first time, winning the clausura title with a game to spare. Founded in 1949, the club represents the mining town of El Salvador in the desert of Atacama, which is home to less than 9,000 people. They wrapped up the title with a 3-2 victory over bottom side Barnechea, who were already relegated, as closest challengers Universidad Catolica let slip a 3-0 lead and missed a penalty to draw at home to Deportivo Iquique.

● PERU
Universidad Cesar Vallejo came from behind to beat Alianza Lima 3-1 in the Final of the Copa Inca, which is the first of the three stages of the 2015 Peruvian Championship. Victory secures Vallejo a place in the semi-finals of December's national title play-offs.

Clausura champions...Deportivo Tachira

● VENEZUELA
Deportivo Tachira drew 2-2 at Caracas on the final day of the season to win the clausura title by two points from their hosts. Deportivo Tachira face apertura winners Trujillanos over two legs in the Grand Final.

➤ Empoli in a game that features three own goals. League leaders Juventus are ordered to close their Curva Sud for the final two home games of the season after violence at Sunday's derby with Torino.
PORTUGAL: After a wait of 17 years, Braga reach the Portuguese Cup Final again, beating Rio Ave 4-1 on aggregate in the semi-finals.
RUSSIA: Zenit coach Andre Villas-Boas says striker Andrei Arshavin and midfielder Anatoly Tymoshchuk, who is Ukraine's national captain, will not be offered new contracts at the end of the season.
SAN MARINO: Folgore beat nine-man Murata 5-0 to win the domestic cup for the first time.

Friday *May 1*

ALGERIA: CAF Champions League holders ES Setif surrender a two-goal lead to draw 2-2 at home to Morocco's Raja Casablanca, and 4-4 on aggregate, before winning on penalties to go through to the group stage of the competition.
AUSTRALIA: Adelaide United beat Brisbane Roar 2-1 in their A-League elimination final and will now face Sydney in next weekend's semi-final.
FRANCE: After a four-game losing streak, Marseille get back to winning ways with a 2-0 victory at Metz.
MEXICO: Atlas come from behind to win 2-1 at Tijuana and go two points clear at the top of the table
SLOVAKIA: League leaders Trencin complete the first half of a potential double, beating Senica on penalties in the Slovak Cup Final after drawing 2-2 after extra time.
SPAIN: Television rights to show La Liga will be sold collectively under new Spanish laws which come into force in 2016. Granada appoint Jose Ramon Sandoval as coach for the last four games of the season after sacking Abel Resino the day after a 2-1 home defeat by Espanyol.

Saturday *May 2*

CROATIA: On-loan Chilean striker Angelo Henriquez gets a hat-trick as Dinamo Zagreb confirm their 10th successive title with a 5-1 victory at RNK Split.
EGYPT: CAF Champions League debutants Smouha reach the group stage by beating AC Leopards of Congo, while record eight-times winners Al Ahly go out on penalties to Moghreb Tetouane of Morocco.
GERMANY: Wolfsburg set a club record of 22 home games unbeaten with a 2-2 draw against Hanover. Bayern Munich go down 2-0 at Bayer Leverksuen.
GIBRALTAR: Lincoln clinch their ➤

CONCACAF

MARTIN DEL PALACIO LANGER

Tenth title in a row for Liga MX

Montreal make an Impact but Mexicans triumph once again

Club America's 5-3 aggregate victory over Canada's Montreal Impact gave Mexico its 10th consecutive CONCACAF Champions League title – a feat no other nation, in any region on the planet, can match. And since Costa Rican side Saprissa were victorious in 2005, seven of the 10 finals since have been contested exclusively by Liga MX teams.

Yet there were times in this season's competition when it looked as though the Aztec clubs might be losing their regional dominance. For the first time ever, two Mexican teams were eliminated at the group stage and the eventual champions seemed to be on the ropes at one point in the Final.

Montreal Impact were undoubtedly the surprise package of the competition. Despite being the worst team in the MLS this year, their rag-tag band of journeymen, consisting of 10 different nationalities, eliminated one seemingly superior rival after another and were just 45 minutes away from a most unexpected fairy-tale ending.

Shock...Piatti (front) puts Impact ahead in the Final's first leg

Impact had advanced through the group phase with ease, despite facing Thierry Henry's New York Red Bulls. Then, in the quarter-finals, they beat four-time winners Pachuca of Mexico with a last-gasp goal after a rebound from a free-kick, and in the semi-finals they beat Alajuelense of Costa Rica on away goals.

In the first leg of the Final at the Estadio Azteca, the

> "Club America's history, talent, payroll, speak for themselves. You give them a chance and they're going to punish you"
>
> Montreal Impact midfielder Dilly Duka

Victorious... Club America celebrate their second-half comeback in Canada

Canadians endured 90 minutes of Club America attacks and the pressure of more than 100,000 fans to earn a shock 1-1 draw. And it was only Mexico international Oribe Peralta's 88th-minute equaliser that denied them victory after Ignacio Piatti had given Impact the lead after 15 minutes.

For the return leg, 61,000 spectators filled the Olympic Stadium in Montreal – a record for the club – hoping to see a historic home win.

And, after 45 minutes, they were closer than ever to the feat after Andres Romero had put them in front. However, the weight of history and the difference in talent proved too much for the unfancied Canadians in the second half.

In just 11 minutes, between the 49th and 61st, America buried the hosts' dream with a three-goal flurry, and they added a fourth 10 minutes from the final whistle.

A late goal was little consolation for Impact, who despite their brave campaign will be left with only memories of what could have been. **WS**

OFC CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

FIVE IN A ROW FOR AUCKLAND

Auckland City were crowned champions of Oceania for the fifth year in a row after a dramatic penalty shoot-out against Kiwi compatriots Team Wellington in the OFC Champions League Final.

Having drawn 1-1 in 90 minutes, Auckland missed a chance to win the contest in extra-time as Darren White's penalty was saved by Michael O'Keefe. Wellington held firm after the dismissal of Chris Bale late on, but could not deny City as Auckland triumphed 4-3 on spot-kicks to win a seventh continental title.

Triumphant...Auckland City

The 12-team tournament was played over 15 days in Fiji and featured eight of Oceania's 11 member associations, with Ba of the host nation and New Caledonia's Gaitcha reaching the semi-finals.

"I've seen an improvement [in playing standards] and the amount of foreign players coming into this part of the world are also improving the skill-set of the squads overall," said winning coach Ramon Tribulietx.

His Auckland City side, who also won the New Zealand championship, will now compete in the Club World Cup in Japan, where 38-year-old Ivan Vicelich will hope to make a record-equalling sixth finals appearance.

13th successive league title.

ITALY: A goal from Arturo Vidal gives Juventus a 1-0 victory against Sampdoria and secures a fourth-straight scudetto.

NORTHERN IRELAND: David Scullion scores the only goal of the game as Glentoran beat Portadown in the Cup Final.

POLAND: Marek Saganowski scores the winning goal as Legia Warsaw beat Lech Poznan 2-1 to win the Polish Cup for a 17th time.

PORTUGAL: Benfica thrash Gil Vicente 5-0 to go six points clear of Porto.

RUSSIA: Hulk's last-minute goal earns league leaders Zenit a 1-1 draw at third-place Spartak Moscow.

SCOTLAND: Aberdeen's 1-0 loss to Dundee United hands a 46th league title to Celtic, who thrashed Dundee 5-0 on Friday night.

SPAIN: Cordoba are relegated after losing 8-0 at home to Barcelona, for whom Luis Suarez scores his first hat-trick as Barca equal their biggest-ever away win in La Liga. Cristiano Ronaldo also grabs a treble as Real Madrid win 3-2 at Sevilla to become the first visiting side to take three points at the Ramon Sanchez Pizjuan for 448 days.

TURKEY: Having twice come from behind, Fenerbahce win 4-3 against Balikesirspor to move two points ahead of Galatasaray at the top of the table.

URUGUAY: Nacional make sure of a place in next year's 2016 Libertadores Cup with a 1-0 victory over Fenix.

WALES: A 2-0 victory over Newtown in the Welsh Cup Final sees The New Saints become the first team since Rhyl in 2004 to win the domestic treble.

Sunday *May 3*

ANDORRA: Santa Coloma retain the championship with a 3-1 victory over UE Sant Julia.

ALGERIA: USM Alger and El Eulma join ES Setif in the last-eight group stage of the CAF Champions League – the first time that three teams from one country have achieved such a feat.

ARGENTINA: Goals from Cristian Pavon and Pablo Perez made in the last six minutes give Boca Juniors a 2-0 victory over River Plate in the *Superclasico*.

AUSTRALIA: Melbourne City beat Wellington Pheonix 2-0 in their A-League Elimination Final to set up a semi-final derby with local rivals Melbourne Victory.

ENGLAND: Chelsea win their first Premier League title since 2010 ➤

Bahamas

STEVE MENARY

Foundation built only on sand

Beach World Cup in 2017 overshadows the traditional game on the island

Hosting a major international tournament is supposed to generate a positive legacy but, on the surface, preparing to host FIFA's biennial Beach World Cup in 2017 does not appear to be helping the grass game in the Bahamas.

The senior national side were beaten 8-0 on aggregate by Bermuda in the first round of the 2018 World Cup qualifiers – two games that overlapped with the 2015 CONCACAF Beach Soccer Championship in El Salvador.

Key players such as the sole full-time professional, Lesly St Fleur, who plays for Montego Bay United in Jamaica, played in the 5-0 thrashing at home but missed the return in Hamilton, where the Bahamas were level until the 79th minute only to lose 3-0.

"There was a struggle to find players," says striker Connor Sheehan, who plies his trade with Canadian club Bombastic in the Vancouver league and played in both legs. "And it was really tough building chemistry with some of the younger guys as we only got together five days before."

A mooted training camp in Tampa and friendlies against local university sides failed to materialise, but that might not have had such an impact had the Bahamas' last game not been their last World Cup qualifier – in July 2011.

After beating the Turks & Caicos Islands to qualify for the second-round group stage, the Bahamas Football Association (BFA) pulled out as the new Chinese-funded Thomas Robinson Stadium in Nassau was not ready. The BFA claimed playing home games against Dominica, Nicaragua and Panama at a neutral venue would have been too expensive.

After three years without a game, the first-leg loss to Bermuda in Nassau was so hard to take that one unidentified national-team player sent an open letter titled "The Death of Grass Soccer" to the local *Tribune* newspaper.

Cameron Hepple – who made his international debut at 14 and was the first Bahamian to participate in the Europa League, when he played for Albanian side KF Tirana – describes the Bermuda game as "really embarrassing". He says: "The BFA's main concern at the moment is beach soccer and the World Cup in 2017.

Skipper...St Fleur

> "The BFA's main concern at the moment is beach soccer and the World Cup in 2017"
> Bahamas international Cameron Hepple

"I think one day they decided we had a better chance at making the Beach Soccer World Cup than grass soccer so what was the point of continuing to put teams in grass competitions and losing money."

Now 27 and without a club, Hepple believes he is the Bahamas' most-capped player – but with just 16 appearances, it is a statistic that illustrates the country's lack of games. Hepple says that, after the 2011 withdrawal, the players were promised the team would enter the next Caribbean Cup, but that never happened.

The Bahamas last entered the Caribbean Cup in 2007, under the guidance of English coach Gary White. They qualified for the second round which, in a country where track and field is the national sport, was a great success. But White's biggest achievement was setting up a centre of excellence in Nassau. More than 50 players, including Sheehan and Hepple, went on to gain college scholarships in the USA.

White, who left in 2007 and now coaches in Guam, remains widely respected in the Bahamas and he has been hard to replace. "The problem is," he says, "if you haven't got someone driving it, it can drop off".

The BFA hope it has found that someone in new

Photo: Nassau Guardian

technical director, Kevin McGreskin, a Scot with a UEFA A licence, who arrived shortly before the World Cup debacle. He has plans for a new national programme centred on the under-15 and under-17 national teams, and is sympathetic to the BFA, which relies on FIFA's annual $250,000 subsidy for funding.

"The players are claiming the support wasn't there," says McGreskin. "If that was the case, you might lose 3-1 or 2-0, but not 8-0 on aggregate. That was because the players were not good enough.

"These guys should be living the life of international players. Some of them only have basic standards of fitness. If the players were serious, why aren't they getting up at 5am and taking a run?

"Why do the track and field athletes and the swimmers here get backing? Because they are prepared to put in the hours.

"I am prepared to back the players, but the commitment has to be there."

For amateur players that commitment can be hard. Sheehan works in construction management in Canada and trained or played five times a week before the Bermuda tie.

"I love the game, it's a release," says Sheehan, who is keen to continue playing. However, like the rest of the national team, he is unsure when that next opportunity might be. WS

➤ with a 1-0 win over Crystal Palace.
FRANCE: A 3-1 loss away to derby rivals Lille sees Lens relegated to Ligue 2. Paris Saint-Germain beat Nantes 2-0 to go back above Lyon.
ITALY: Roma climb to second place with a 2-0 home triumph over Genoa, a point above city rivals Lazio, who were held to a 1-1 draw at Atalanta. Milan's Mattia De Sciglio is sent off after just 45 seconds in a 3-0 defeat at Napoli.
HOLLAND: Albert Rusnak scores both goals as Groningen win the Dutch Cup for the first time, beating holders PEC Zwolle 2-0 in the final.
VENEZUELA: Deportivo Tachira draw 2-2 at Caracas on the final day of the season to win the clausura title by two points from their hosts.

Monday *May 4*

DJIBOUTI: Champions for a third successive time, Ali Sabieh Djibouti Telecom end the season with a 9-0 thrashing of AJ Jago to finish six points clear of AS Port.
EGYPT: Al Ahly sack Spanish coach Juan Carlos Garrido after the eight-times winners fail to make the group stage of this year's CAF Champions League.
PORTUGAL: Braga secure a place in next season's Europa League with a 2-2 draw against Pacos de Ferreira.

Superclasico...River (in white) and Boca clash in the Libertadores

Tuesday *May 5*

ARGENTINA: Four-times winners Estudiantes beat Colombia's Santa Fe 2-1 in their home leg of the Libertadores Cup last 16.
BRAZIL: National coach Dunga leaves Chelsea's Oscar, who is currently injured, out of his 23-man squad for the Copa America.
CHINA: Beijing Guoan finish top of their AFC Champions League group with a 1-1 draw in South Korea against Suwon Bluewings, who also go through to the knockout phase.
ITALY: Goals from Alvaro Morata and Carlos Tevez, either side of Cristiano Ronaldo's 76th in the competition, give Juventus a 2-1 win over Real Madrid in the home leg of their Champions League semi-final.
MEXICO: Having won 2-1 in Bolivia in the first leg last week, Tigres reach the Libertadores quarter-finals with a 1-1 draw against Universitario.
SOUTH KOREA: A stoppage-time winner from Mauricio Molina takes Seoul through to the last 16 of the AFC Champions League with a 3-2 victory over Kashima Antlers.

Wednesday *May 6*

ARMENIA: League leaders Pyunik remain on course for the double with a 3-1 victory over Mika in the Armenian Cup Final.
BRAZIL: In the two all-Brazilian Libertadores Cup round-of-16 first legs, Sao Paulo beat Cruzeiro 1-0 while Atletico Mineiro and Internacional draw 2-2. Corinthians go down 2-0 to Guarani in Paraguay.
IRAN: Naft Tehran qualify for the knockout stage of the AFC Champions League despite losing 3-0 at Al Ain as Pakhtakor are beaten 2-0 by Al Shabab.
SPAIN: Three goals in the final 13 minutes give Barcelona a 3-0 advantage over Bayern Munich ahead of their Champions League semi-final second leg in Germany next week. The Spanish Football Federation suspends all domestic games from May 16 in a row with the government over television rights.
THAILAND: Despite winning 5-0 against Guangzhou R&F of China, and Diogo scoring a hat-trick, Buriram United go out of the AFC Champions League as Gamba Osaka of Japan beat South Korea's Seongnam in Group F's other game.

Thursday *May 7*

ARGENTINA: A Carlos Sanchez penalty 10 minutes from time gives River Plate a 1-0 win Boca Juniors in the first leg of their Libertadores Cup last-16 tie.
ENGLAND: Manchester United agree to sign PSV winger Memphis Depay, subject to a medical, when the transfer window opens in June.
SPAIN: Sevilla stretch their unbeaten run in Europe to nine games with a 3-0 victory over Fiorentina in the first leg of their Europa League semi-final.
UKRAINE: Dnipro snatch a vital away goal in a 1-1 draw at Napoli in the Europa League.

Friday *May 8*

AUSTRALIA: A crowd of 58,873 watch Melbourne Victory beat city rivals Melbourne City 3-0 at the ➤

➤ Etihad Stadium to reach the A-League Grand Final.
EUROPA LEAGUE: England, Holland and the Republic of Ireland are each awarded an extra place in next season's competition through UEFA's fair-play rankings.
FRANCE: Edinson Cavani scores a hat-trick as Paris Saint-Germain thrash Guingamp 6-0.
SCOTLAND: St Mirren are relegated from the Premiership as a result of Motherwell beating Kilmarnock 3-1.

Saturday *May 9*

ARGENTINA: Olimpo collect three points for the first time this season, winning 3-1 at Huracan.
AUSTRALIA: Sydney will meet Melbourne Victory in the A-League Grand Final after they beat Adelaide United 4-1 in their semi-final.
ENGLAND: Despite winning 1-0 at Hull City, Burnley are relegated from the Premier League.
FRANCE: Lyon's 3-0 defeat at Caen leaves them six points behind Paris Saint-Germain with two games to play. Bordeaux beat Nantes 2-1 in their last game at Stade Chaban-Delmas, their home since 1938.
GERMANY: Goalkeeper Pepe Reina is sent off as Bayern Munich lose for a fourth successive game, going down 1-0 to Augsburg. Borussia Monchengladbach go second with a 3-0 victory over Bayer Leverkusen.
ITALY: Mattia Destro, who is on loan at Roma from Milan, scores his side's second goal as they beat his parent club 2-1.
KUWAIT: Despite winning 7-0 against Al Tadamon on the last day of the season, Al Arabi finish level on points with Kuwait SC but miss out on the title due to KSC's better head-to-head record.
SPAIN: Cristiano Ronaldo misses a penalty as Real Madrid draw 2-2 at home to fourth-place Valencia. Barcelona beat Real Sociedad 2-0.

Loan star...Destro

Sunday *May 10*

ANDORRA: Goalkeeper Jesus Coca scores one spot-kick and saves another as Sant Julia beat FC Santa Coloma to retain the Andorran Cup on penalties after a 1-1 draw.
BOLIVIA: Apertura winners Bolivar add the clausura title to their haul with a 1-0 victory over San Jose.
BRAZIL: Defending champions Cruzeiro are beaten 1-0 at home by Corinthians on the opening weekend of the national championship.
ENGLAND: A 6-0 loss at Manchester City sees QPR relegated. John Terry scores his 39th Premier League goal in Chelsea's 1-1 draw with Liverpool to become the competition's all-time top goalscoring defender.
GERMANY: Wolfsburg move above Borussia Monchengladbach into second with a 3-1 win at Paderborn.
ITALY: Lazio miss the chance to go second as they lose 2-1 at home to Internazionale, while Cesena lose to Sassuolo and are relegated.
MEXICO: Cruz Azul's 2-0 loss at home to Universidad Guadalajara

ESM XI
EUROPEAN SPORTS MEDIA

HOW IT WORKS
Every month, journalists from each member of the European Sports Media group select their first XI based on the best individual performances from Europe's top competitions. For details of how each ESM member voted, visit worldsoccer.com/esm11

SEASON RANKINGS
Cumulative votes through the season

GOALKEEPERS

David DE GEA (Manchester United)	19 votes
Manuel NEUER (Bayern Munich)	19
Gianluigi BUFFON (Juventus)	15
Thibaut COURTOIS (Chelsea)	11
Jan OBLAK (Atletico Madrid)	8
Bernd LENO (Bayer Leverkusen)	4
Danijel SUBASIC (Monaco)	4
Claudio BRAVO (Barcelona)	3
David OSPINA (Arsenal)	3
Iker CASILLAS (Real Madrid)	2
Joe HART (Manchester City)	2
Simon MIGNOLET (Liverpool)	2
ROBERTO (Olympiakos)	2
Igor AKINFEEV (CSKA Moscow)	1
Sergio ALVAREZ (Celta Vigo)	1
Diego ALVES (Valencia)	1
Fraser FORSTER (Southampton)	1
Jasmin HANDANOVIC (Maribor)	1
Hugo LLORIS (Tottenham Hotspur)	1
Anthony LOPES (Lyon)	1
Diego LOPEZ (Milan)	1
Steve MANDANDA (Marseille)	1
Stephane RUFFIER (Saint-Etienne)	1
Mat RYAN (Club Brugge)	1
Yann SOMMER (Borussia Monchengladbach)	1

DEFENDERS

Branislav IVANOVIC (Chelsea)	34
Sergio RAMOS (Real Madrid)	28
David ALABA (Bayern Munich)	20
Giorgio CHIELLINI (Juventus)	19
Gerard PIQUE (Barcelona)	18
John TERRY (Chelsea)	17
Juan BERNAT (Bayern Munich)	15
PEPE (Real Madrid)	13
Jerome BOATENG (Bayern Munich)	12
Leonardo BONUCCI (Juventus)	12
Diego GODIN (Atletico Madrid)	12
MARCELO (Real Madrid)	11
David LUIZ (Paris Saint-Germain)	9
MIRANDA (Atletico Madrid)	9
JUANFRAN (Atletico Madrid)	8
Jeremy MATHIEU (Barcelona)	8
NALDO (Wolfsburg)	8
Stephan LICHTSTEINER (Juventus)	7
Jordi ALBA (Barcelona)	6
DANILO (Porto)	6
Nicolas OTAMENDI (Valencia)	6
Ricardo RODRIGUEZ (Wolfsburg)	6
Pablo ZABALETA (Manchester City)	6
Nathaniel CLYNE (Southampton)	5
Javier MASCHERANO (Barcelona)	5
MAXWELL (Paris Saint-Germain)	5
Cesar AZPILICUETA (Chelsea)	4
Nicolas N'KOULOU (Marseille)	4
Gary CAHILL (Chelsea)	3
Jose Luis GAYA (Valencia)	3
Kostas MANOLAS (Roma)	3
Nacho MONREAL (Arsenal)	3
Maxi PEREIRA (Benfica)	3
Thiago SILVA (Paris Saint-Germain)	3
Martin SKRTEL (Liverpool)	3
Martin STRANZL (Borussia Monchengladbach)	3
Raphael VARANE (Real Madrid)	3
Aymen ABDENNOUR (Monaco)	2
Dani ALVES (Barcelona)	2
Leighton BAINES (Everton)	2
Hector BELLERIN (Arsenal)	2
Mehdi BENATIA (Bayern Munich)	2
Dani CARVAJAL (Real Madrid)	2
Ashley COLE (Roma)	2
FABINHO (Monaco)	2
Jose FONTE (Southampton)	2
Jose GIMENEZ (Atletico Madrid)	2
Christophe JALLET (Lyon)	2
Laurent KOSCIELNY (Arsenal)	2
RAFINHA (Bayern Munich)	2
Danny ROSE (Tottenham Hotspur)	2
Paul VERHAEGH (Augsburg)	2
Toby ALDERWEIRELD (Southampton)	1
Jordan AMAVI (Nice)	1
Davide ASTORI (Roma)	1
Dusan BASTA (Lazio)	1
Andrea BARZAGLI (Juventus)	1
Ryan BERTRAND (Southampton)	1
Milan BISEVAC (Lyon)	1
Daley BLIND (Manchester United)	1
BRITOS (Napoli)	1
Alex BRUCE (Hull City)	1
Martin CACERES (Juventus)	1
CAICARA (Ludogorets)	1
CARLAO (APOEL)	1
Daniel CARRICO (Sevilla)	1
Gael CLICHY (Manchester City)	1
Damien DA SILVA (Caen)	1
Scott DANN (Crystal Palace)	1
Patrice EVRA (Juventus)	1
Rod FANNI (Marseille)	1
Kieran GIBBS (Arsenal)	1
Faouzi GHOULAM (Napoli)	1
Camil GLICK (Torino)	1
Raphael GUERREIRO (Lorient)	1
Benedikt HOWEDES (Schalke)	1
Mats HUMMELS (Borussia Dortmund)	1
Daryl JANMAAT (Newcastle United)	1
Tin JEDVAJ (Bayer Leverkusen)	1
JEFFERSON (Sporting Lisbon)	1
Aleksandar KOLAROV (Manchester City)	1
Layvin KURZAWA (Monaco)	1
Filipe LUIS (Chelsea)	1
MAICON (Roma)	1
Eliaquim MANGALA (Manchester City)	1
MARQUINHOS (Paris Saint-Germain)	1
Carl MEDJANI (Trabzonspor)	1
Philippe MEXES (Milan)	1
Alberto MORENO (Liverpool)	1
Shkodran MUSTAFI (Valencia)	1
Fernando NAVARRO (Sevilla)	1
Paulo OLIVEIRA (Sporting Lisbon)	1
Manuel PASQUAL (Fiorentina)	1
Karium REFIK (PSV)	1
Winston REID (West Ham United)	1
Gonzalo RODRIGUEZ (Fiorentina)	1
Alex SANDRO (Porto)	1
Emir SPAHIC (Bayer Leverkusen)	1
Gregory VAN DER WIEL (Paris Saint-Germain)	1
VIEIRINHA (Wolfsburg)	1
WALLACE (Monaco)	1
WENDELL (Bayer Leverkusen)	1
Jetro WILLEMS (PSV Eindhoven)	1
Kurt ZOUMA (Chelsea)	1

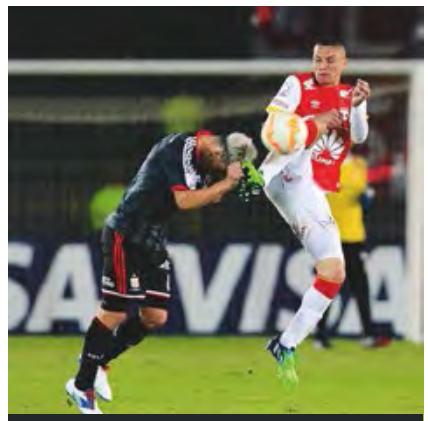
MIDFIELDERS

Arjen ROBBEN (Bayern Munich)	39
Cesc FABREGAS (Chelsea)	24
Eden HAZARD (Chelsea)	22
Paul POGBA (Juventus)	22
Kevin DE BRUYNE (Wolfsburg)	20
Xabi ALONSO (Bayern Munich)	13
Antoine GRIEZMANN (Atletico Madrid)	13
Toni KROOS (Real Madrid)	13
ISCO (Real Madrid)	10
Mario GOTZE (Bayern Munich)	9
Yaya TOURE (Manchester City)	9
Philipp LAHM (Bayern Munich)	8
Nemanja MATIC (Chelsea)	8
Marco REUS (Borussia Dortmund)	7
Marco VERRATTI (Paris Saint-Germain)	7
Felipe ANDERSON (Lazio)	6
Ivan RAKITIC (Barcelona)	6
James RODRIGUEZ (Real Madrid)	6
THIAGO Alcantara (Bayern Munich)	6
Philippe COUTINHO (Liverpool)	5
Arturo VIDAL (Juventus)	5
Santi CAZORLA (Arsenal)	4
Thomas MULLER (Bayern Munich)	4
Radja NAINGGOLAN (Roma)	4
Dani PAREJO (Valencia)	4
David SILVA (Manchester City)	4
Jose Maria CALLEJON (Napoli)	3
Angel DI MARIA (Manchester United)	3
Christian ERIKSEN (Tottenham Hotspur)	3
NANI (Sporting Lisbon)	3
Javier PASTORE (Paris Saint-Germain)	3
Andrea PIRLO (Juventus)	3
Miralem PJANIC (Roma)	3
Mohamed SALAH (Fiorentina)	3
ARDA Turan (Atletico Madrid)	2
Gareth BALE (Real Madrid)	2
Yacine BRAHIMI (Porto)	2
Marouane FELLAINI (Manchester United)	2
Giannelli IMBULA (Marseille)	2
KOKE (Atletico Madrid)	2
Geoffrey KONDOGBIA (Monaco)	2
Frank LAMPARD (Manchester City)	2
Claudio MARCHISIO (Juventus)	2
Juan MATA (Manchester United)	2
RAFFAEL (Borussia Monchengladbach)	2
Wesley SNEIJDER (Galatasaray)	2
Jeremy TOULALAN (Monaco)	2
Karim BELLARABI (Bayer Leverkusen)	1
Sergio BUSQUETS (Barcelona)	1
Michael CARRICK (Manchester United)	1
Denis CHERYSHEV (Villarreal)	1
Francis COQUELIN (Arsenal)	1
Alessandro FLORENZI (Roma)	1
GABI (Atletico Madrid)	1
Steven GERRARD (Liverpool)	1
Maxime GONALONS (Lyon)	1
Yoann GOURCUFF (Lyon)	1
Hector HERRERA (Porto)	1
Luka MODRIC (Real Madrid)	1
Saul NIGUEZ (Atletico Madrid)	1
Dimitry PAYET (Marseille)	1
Pablo PIATTI (Valencia)	1

means they miss out on the Liga MX play-offs.
NAMIBIA: League champions African Stars beat relegation-bound Rebels 4-0 to end the season a domestic record of 10 points clear of second-place Black Africa.
SAUDI ARABIA: Al Nassr retain their league title with a 1-0 victory over Al Hilal, who have three players sent off.
VENEZUELA: Trujillanos and Deportivo Tachira draw 0-0 in the first leg of the Grand Final.

Monday *May 11*

BRAZIL: National coach Dunga will take charge of the country's under-23 side at next year's Olympic Games on home soil.
CYPRUS: Despite being two points clear at the top of the table with two games to go, APOEL Nicosia sack coach Thorsten Fink after Sunday's 1-0 loss to second-place Apollon.
GERMANY: Schalke cancel the contracts of Kevin-Prince Boateng and Sidney Sam following a 2-0 defeat by Cologne on Sunday.
PORTUGAL: Vitoria Guimaraes seal a place in the Europa League next season with a 2-2 draw at Nacional.
USA: New York Red Bulls beat New York City 2-1 in their derby clash in front of a sell-out crowd of 25,217 at the Red Bull Arena.


Qualified...Sante Fe (in red)

Tuesday *May 12*

ARGENTINA: Internazionale's Mauro Icardi, the third-highest scorer in Serie A this season with 18 goals, is overlooked for the Copa America. Carlos Tevez and Javier Pastore are named in coach Gerardo Martino's preliminary 30-man squad.
BELGIUM: Malaysian billionaire Vincent Tan, who already owns Cardiff City of the English second tier and Bosnian side Sarajevo, buys Belgian top-flight club Kortrijk for a reported fee of around €5million.
COLOMBIA: Santa Fe become the first team to qualify for the Libertadores Cup quarter-finals, winning 2-0 at home to Estudiantes and overturning a 2-1 deficit from the first leg in Argentina.
SPAIN: Despite a 3-2 defeat in Germany, Barcelona beat Bayern Munich 5-3 on aggregate to reach the Champions League Final.

Wednesday *May 13*

ITALY: Former Real Madrid striker Alvaro Morata scores the equaliser as Juventus draw 1-1 in Spain to win 3-2 on aggregate and reach the Champions League Final for the first time in 12 years.
LIECHTENSTEIN: Vaduz won the cup for a 43rd time, beating third-tier Triesenberg 5-0 in the Final.
PARAGUAY: Guarani win 1-0 away to Brazilian side Corinthians to go through to the Libertadores Cup quarter-finals 3-0 on aggregate.
SERBIA: Partizan Belgrade win their eighth championship in nine years, with two games to play, as they win 2-0 away at Napredak. They have now equalled Red Star Belgrade's record of 26 league titles.

Franck RIBERY (Bayern Munich)	1
Bernardo SILVA (Monaco)	1
TALISCA (Benfica)	1
Granit XHAKA (Borussia Monchengladbach)	1

FORWARDS

Lionel MESSI (Barcelona)	60
Cristiano RONALDO (Real Madrid)	55
Luis SUAREZ (Barcelona)	28
NEYMAR (Barcelona)	23
Sergio AGUERO (Manchester City)	20
Harry KANE (Tottenham Hotspur)	18
Diego COSTA (Chelsea)	17
Bas DOST (Wolfsburg)	13
Carlos TEVEZ (Juventus)	13
Karim BENZEMA (Real Madrid)	8
Alexandre LACAZETTE (Lyon)	8
Graziano PELLE (Southampton)	5
Alexis SANCHEZ (Arsenal)	5
Francesco TOTTI (Roma)	5
Wayne ROONEY (Manchester United)	4
Luiz ADRIANO (Shakhtar Donetsk)	2
Paulo DYBALA (Palermo)	2
Andre-Pierre GIGNAC (Marseille)	2
Javier HERNANDEZ (Real Madrid)	2
Alexander MEIER (Eintracht Frankfurt)	2
Alvaro MORATA (Juventus)	2
Diafra SAKHO (West Ham United)	2
Paco ALCACER (Valencia)	1
Tom DE SUTTER (Club Brugge)	1
Eljero ELIA (Southampton)	1
Mauro ICARDI (Internazionale)	1
Robert LEWANDOWSKI (Bayern Munich)	1
Jackson MARTINEZ (Porto)	1
Cristian TELLO (Porto)	1
Luca TONI (Verona)	1
Fernando TORRES (Atletico Madrid)	1
Danny WELBECK (Arsenal)	1
Simone ZAZA (Sassuolo)	1

ESM – EUROPEAN SPORTS MEDIA
The members of ESM are: *A Bola* (Portugal), *Elf* (Holland), *Fanatik* (Turkey), *Frankfurter Allegmeine Zeitung* (Germany), *Goal News* (Greece), *Kicker* (Germany), *Marca* (Spain), *Nemzeti Sport* (Hungary), *So Foot* (France), *Sport* (Belgium), *Sport Express* (Russia), *De Telegraaf* (Holland), *TIPSbladet* (Denmark), *World Soccer* (England). More details of votes at **worldsoccer.com/votes**

World Service

Club football

EUROPE

UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Quarter-finals

1st legs

Apr 14
Atletico Madrid (Spa) 0
Real Madrid (Spa) 0
Att: 52,553. **Ref:** Mazic (Ser)

Apr 14
Juventus (Ita) 1 (Vidal pen 57)
Monaco (Fra) 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 40,801. **Ref:** Kralovec (CzR)

Apr 15
Paris Saint-Germain (Fra) 1 (Mathieu og 82)
Barcelona (Spa) 3 (Neymar 18, Suarez 67, 79)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 45,893. **Ref:** Clattenburg (Eng)

Apr 15
Porto (Por) 3 (Quaresma pen 3, 10, Martinez 65)
Bayern Munich (Ger) 1 (Thiago 28)
HT: 2-1. **Att:** 50,092. **Ref:** Velasco Carballo (Spa)

2nd legs

Apr 21
Barcelona 2 (Neymar 14, 34)
Paris Saint-Germain 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 84,477. **Ref:** Moen (Nor)
Barcelona 5-1 on agg

Apr 21
Bayern Munich 6 (Thiago 14, Boateng 22, Lewandowski 27, 40, Muller 36, Xabi Alonso 88)
Porto 1 (Martinez 73)
HT: 5-0. **Att:** 70,000. **Ref:** Atkinson (Eng)
Sent off: Marcano (Porto) 87
Bayern Munich 7-4 on agg

Apr 22
Monaco 0
Juventus 0
Att: 16,889. **Ref:** Collum (Sco)
Juventus 1-0 on agg

Apr 22
Real Madrid 1 (Hernandez 88)
Atletico Madrid 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 78,300. **Ref:** Brych (Ger)
Sent off: Arda (Atletico Madrid) 76
Real Madrid 1-0 on agg

EUROPA LEAGUE

Quarter-finals

1st legs - Apr 16; 2nd legs - Apr 23
Club Brugge (Blg) v Dnipro (Ukr)
0-0, 0-1 (agg 0-1)
Dynamo Kiev (Ukr) v Fiorentina (Ita)
1-1, 0-2 (agg 1-3)
Sevilla (Spa) v Zenit St Petersburg (Rus)
2-1, 2-2 (agg 4-3)
Wolfsburg (Ger) v Napoli (Ita)
1-4, 2-2 (agg 3-6)

ANDORRA

Division split after 14-round regular season; teams carried forward full regular-season record

2014-15 – CHAMPIONSHIP GROUP – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
FC S Coloma (C)	20	13	3	4	64	14	42
Lusitans	20	12	3	5	53	26	39
UE S Coloma	20	12	2	6	33	17	38
Sant Julia	20	9	5	6	41	23	32

2014-15 – RELEGATION GROUP – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Ordino	20	10	3	7	36	29	33
Encamp[1]	20	7	3	10	21	34	21
Engordany[2]	20	5	2	13	21	72	17
Inter Club (R)	20	1	1	18	9	63	4

[1]3pts deducted [2]Enter rel/prom play-off

Previous winners (3 most recent)
2011-12 Lusitans
2012-13 Lusitans
2013-14 FC Santa Coloma

GREECE

2014-15 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Olympiakos (C)	34	24	6	4	79	23	78
Panath'kos[1, 2]	34	21	6	7	59	31	66
PAOK[1]	34	20	5	9	57	42	65
Asteras[1]	34	17	8	9	52	37	59
Atromitos[1]	34	14	12	8	43	27	54
Giannina	34	13	14	7	47	33	53
Panetolikos	34	14	10	10	41	28	52
Xanthi	34	12	11	11	44	41	47
Platanias	34	12	8	14	32	30	44
Kerkyra	34	12	8	14	39	38	44
Kalloni	34	11	11	12	34	39	44
Panthrakikos	34	11	10	13	35	44	43
Panionios	34	11	10	13	43	42	43
Veria	34	12	7	15	45	54	43
Levadiakos (R)	34	12	7	15	41	34	43
Ergotelis (R)	34	8	8	18	35	60	32
OFI[3] (R)	34	7	2	25	26	72	-6
Niki[3] (R)	34	2	1	31	7	84	-6

[1]Teams finishing 2nd to 5th enter play-offs for the country's 2nd Champions League place
[2]3pts deducted for fan violence
[3]OFI and Niki both withdrew from the competition mid-season and all their remaining games were awarded as 3-0 wins to their scheduled opponents; both had their points tally reduced to -6

Previous winners (5 most recent)
2009-10 Panathinaikos
2010-11 Olympiakos
2011-12 Olympiakos
2012-13 Olympiakos
2013-14 Olympiakos

MALTA

2014-15 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts[1]
Hibernians (C)	33	27	5	1	97	24	56
Valletta	33	22	3	8	74	30	47
Birkirkara	33	19	7	7	59	31	43
Balzan	33	17	8	8	59	45	42
Floriana	33	13	11	9	58	51	36
Sliema	33	10	9	14	50	56	26
Naxxar	33	9	9	15	40	51	25
Qormi	33	8	9	16	40	55	24
Tarxien	33	8	9	16	35	60	23
Mosta[2]	33	9	6	18	38	72	21
Pieta (R)	33	6	8	19	30	58	16
Zebbug (R)	33	5	6	22	37	84	12

[1]Points totals were halved after the first 22 rounds; points gained in the final 11 rounds were retained in full
[2]Enter rel/prom play-off

Previous winners (3 most recent)
2011-12 Valletta
2012-13 Birkirkara
2013-14 Valletta

NORTHERN IRELAND

Division split after 33-round regular season; teams carried forward full regular-season record

2014-15 – CHAMPIONSHIP GROUP – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Crusaders (C)	38	25	7	6	93	43	82
Linfield	38	21	9	8	67	46	72
Glenavon	38	20	6	12	82	65	66
Portadown	38	17	11	10	65	56	62
Cliftonville	38	16	13	9	71	47	61
Glentoran	38	16	10	12	67	51	58

2014-15 – RELEGATION GROUP – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Ballymena	38	15	6	17	62	75	51
Coleraine	38	13	7	18	48	55	46
Ball'mallard	38	10	9	19	40	71	39
Dungannon	38	8	13	17	38	56	37
Warrenpoint[1]	38	6	12	20	50	76	30
Institute (R)	38	4	9	25	36	84	21

[1]Stay in top division after winning rel/prom play-off

Previous winners (3 most recent)
2011-12 Linfield
2012-13 Cliftonville
2013-14 Cliftonville

WALES

Division split after 22-round regular season; teams carried forward full regular-season record

2014-15 – CHAMPIONSHIP GROUP – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
New Saints (C)	32	23	8	1	90	24	77
Bala	32	18	5	9	67	42	59
Airbus UK	32	18	4	10	62	34	58
Aberystwyth	32	14	10	8	69	61	52
Port Talbot	32	13	4	15	54	59	43
Newtown	32	10	8	14	52	65	38

2014-15 – RELEGATION GROUP – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Connah's Quay	32	11	10	11	44	53	43
Rhyl	32	11	9	12	41	49	42
Carmarthen	32	12	6	14	48	57	42
Bangor	32	9	8	15	48	62	35
Cefn Druids (R)	32	7	6	19	38	64	27
Prestatyn (R)	32	4	6	22	43	86	18

Previous winners (3 most recent)
2011-12 The New Saints
2012-13 The New Saints
2013-14 The New Saints

SOUTH AMERICA

LIBERTADORES CUP

Group 1

Feb 17
Atlas (Mex) 0
Santa Fe (Col) 1 (Arias 78)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Haro (Per)

Feb 18
Colo Colo (Chl) 2 (Flores 39, Paredes 67)
Atletico Mineiro (Bra) 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Vigliano (Arg)

Feb 25
Atletico Mineiro 0
Atlas 1 (Suarez 87)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Ubriaco (Uru)

Feb 26
Santa Fe 3 (Morelo 35, 44, 66)
Colo Colo 1 (Suazo pen 52)
HT: 2-0. **Ref:** Delfino (Arg)
Sent off: Salazar (Santa Fe) 69

Mar 4
Colo Colo 2 (Paredes pen 69, 90)
Atlas 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Orozco (Bol)
Sent off: Kannemann (Atlas) 81

Mar 18
Santa Fe 0
Atletico Mineiro 1 (Pratto 59)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Pitana (Arg)

Apr 7
Atlas 1 (Medina pen 20)
Colo Colo 3 (Paredes 10, 84, Caceres 90+2)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Pitana (Arg)

Apr 9
Atletico Mineiro 2 (Carlos 13, Guilherme 90+1)
Santa Fe 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Cunha (Uru)

Apr 15
Atlas 1 (Gonzalez 40)
Atletico Mineiro 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Loustau (Arg)

Apr 15
Colo Colo 0
Santa Fe 3 (Paez 31, Perez 47, Mina 68)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Ubriaco (Uru)

Apr 22
Atletico Mineiro 2 (Pratto 19, Rafael Carioca 80)
Colo Colo 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Vera (Ecu)

Apr 22
Santa Fe 3 (Perez 21, Roa 31, Rivera 90+3)
Atlas 1 (Kannemann 61)
HT: 2-0. **Ref:** Vigliano (Arg)

LIBERTADORES CUP – GROUP 1 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Santa Fe (Q)	6	4	0	2	10	5	12
At Mineiro (Q)	6	3	0	3	5	4	9
Colo Colo	6	3	0	3	8	9	9
Atlas	6	2	0	4	4	9	6

Group 2

Feb 18
Corinthians (Bra) 2 (Elias 12, Jadson 68)
Sao Paulo (Bra) 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Marques (Bra)

Feb 19
Danubio (Uru) 1 (Castro 11)
San Lorenzo (Arg) 2 (Matos 86, Cetto 88)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Caceres (Par)

Feb 25
Sao Paulo 4 (Alexandre Pato 4, 41, Reinaldo 69, Jonathan Cafu 89)
Danubio 0
HT: 2-0. **Ref:** Osses (Chl)
Sent off: Pereira (Danubio) 73

Mar 4
San Lorenzo 0
Corinthians 1 (Elias 66)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Vera (Ecu)

Mar 17
Danubio 1 (Barreto 90+3)
Corinthians 2 (Guerrero 70, Felipe 80)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Bascunan (Chl)

Mar 18
Sao Paulo 1 (Michel Bastos 90)
San Lorenzo 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Roldan (Col)
Sent off: Cetto (San Lorenzo) 90+4 (from the bench)

Apr 1
Corinthians 4 (Jadson 27, Guerrero 34, 46, 68)
Danubio 0
HT: 2-0. **Ref:** Haro (Per)
Sent off: De los Santos (Danubio) 84

Apr 1
San Lorenzo 1 (Cauteruccio 71)
Sao Paulo 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Osses (Chl)

Apr 15
Danubio 1 (Sosa 48)
Sao Paulo 2 (Alexandre Pato 60, Centurion 90+1)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Argote (Ven)

Apr 16
Corinthians 0
San Lorenzo 0
Ref: Carrillo (Per)

Apr 22
San Lorenzo 0
Danubio 1 (Viana 89)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Buitrago (Col)

Apr 22
Sao Paulo 2 (Luis Fabiano 32, Michel Bastos 39)
Corinthians 0
HT: 2-0. **Ref:** Ricci (Bra)
Sent off: Emerson Sheik 19, Mendoza 55 (both Corinthians); Luis Fabiano (Sao Paulo) 55

LIBERTADORES CUP – GROUP 2 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Corinthians (Q)	6	4	1	1	9	3	13
Sao Paulo (Q)	6	4	0	2	9	4	12
San Lorenzo	6	2	1	3	3	4	7
Danubio	6	1	0	5	4	14	3

Group 3

Feb 24
Huracan (Arg) 2 (Villarruel 28, Dominguez pen 89)
Mineros de Guayana (Ven) 2 (Valoyes 22, pen 82)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Velez (Col)

Feb 25
Universitario Sucre (Bol) 0
Cruzeiro (Bra) 0
Ref: Ponce (Ecu)
Sent off: Joel (Cruzeiro) 84

Mar 3
Cruzeiro 0
Huracan 0
Ref: Caceres (Par)

Mar 3
Mineros de Guayana 0
Universitario Sucre 1 (Castro 74)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Guerrero (Mex)
Sent off: Valoyes (Mineros) 81

Mar 10
Universitario Sucre 0
Huracan 0
Ref: Argote (Ven)

Mar 19
Mineros de Guayana 0
Cruzeiro 2 (Leandro Damiao 12, Marquinhos 83)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Vera (Ecu)

Apr 8
Cruzeiro 3 (De Arrascaeta 13, Leandro Damiao 15, Henrique 73)
Mineros de Guayana 0
HT: 2-0. **Ref:** Osorio (Chl)

Apr 8
Huracan 1 (Abila 35)
Universitario Sucre 1 (Suarez 40)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Mereles (Par)

Apr 14
Huracan 3 (Abila 15, 26, Mancinelli 63)
Cruzeiro 1 (Leandro Damiao pen 61)
HT: 2-0. **Ref:** Polic (Chl)

Apr 14
Universitario Sucre 2 (Castro 45+2, Suarez 85)
Mineros de Guayana 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Arias (Par)

Apr 21
Cruzeiro 2 (Willian 38, Leo 57)
Universitario Sucre 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Zambrano (Ecu)

Apr 21
Mineros de Guayana 3 (Valoyes 10, 40, Acosta 65)
Huracan 0
HT: 2-0. **Ref:** Fedorczuk (Uru)

LIBERTADORES CUP – GROUP 3 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Cruzeiro (Q)	6	3	2	1	8	3	11
Univ Sucre (Q)	6	2	3	1	4	3	9
Huracan	6	1	4	1	6	7	7
Mineros	6	1	1	4	5	10	4

Group 4

Feb 17
The Strongest (Bol) 3 (Chumacero 11, 85, Ramallo 15)
Internacional (Bra) 1 (D'Alessandro pen 49)
HT: 2-0. **Ref:** Velez (Col)
Sent off: Nilmar (Internacional) 89

Feb 17
Universidad de Chile (Chl) 0
Emelec (Ecu) 1 (Bolanos 64)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Trucco (Arg)
Sent off: Gimenez 81, Narvaez 88 (both Emelec)

Feb 24
Emelec 3 (Bolanos 4, Fernandez 24, Mena 69)
The Strongest 0
HT: 2-0. **Ref:** Argote (Ven)

Feb 26
Internacional 3 (D'Alessandro pen 45+2, Jorge Henrique 61, Eduardo Sasha 78)
Universidad de Chile 1 (Canales 67)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Carrillo (Per)

Mar 4
Internacional 3 (Nilmar 11, Alex 60, Rever 82)
Emelec 2 (Burbano 23, Mena 45+2)
HT: 1-2. **Ref:** Pitana (Arg)

Mar 5
Universidad de Chile 3 (Lorenzetti 20, Ubilla 71, Canales 78)
The Strongest 1 (Escobar 17)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Lamouroux (Col)
Sent off: Veizaga (The Strongest) 55

Mar 17
The Strongest 5 (Centurion 45+1, Wayar 51, Cristaldo 69, Martelli 73, Ramallo 86)
Universidad de Chile 3 (Benegas 21, Ubilla 71, Corujo 72)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Amarilla (Par)

Mar 18
Emelec 1 (Mena 32)
Internacional 1 (Vitinho 56)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Vigliano (Arg)
Sent off: Lastra (Emelec) 54

Apr 15
The Strongest 1 (Chumacero 58)
Emelec 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Buitrago (Col)

Apr 16
Universidad de Chile 0
Internacional 4 (Nilmar 9, 32, Eduardo Sasha 13, Valdivia 58)
HT: 0-3. **Ref:** Trucco (Arg)

Apr 22
Emelec 2 (Bolanos 42, 63)
Universidad de Chile 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Garcia (Mex)

Apr 22
Internacional 1 (Valdivia 41)
The Strongest 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Caceres (Par)

LIBERTADORES CUP – GROUP 4 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Internac'al (Q)	6	4	1	1	13	7	13
Emelec (Q)	6	3	1	2	9	5	10
The Strongest	6	3	0	3	10	11	9
Univ de Chile	6	1	0	5	7	16	3

Group 5

Feb 17
Wanderers (Uru) 3 (Rodriguez 45+2, Albarracin pen 79, Reymundez 82)
Zamora (Ven) 2 (Murillo 26, Flores 54)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Orozco (Bol)
Sent off: Faria 20, Ovalle 78, Murillo 90+3 (all Zamora); Colombino 31, Mascia 90+3 (both Wanderers)

Feb 18
Palestino (Chl) 0
Boca Juniors (Arg) 2 (Chavez 38, Palacios 69)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Roldan (Col)

Feb 26
Boca Juniors 2 (Komar 33, Osvaldo 43)
Wanderers 1 (Riolfo 34)
HT: 2-1. **Ref:** Marques (Bra)

Feb 26
Zamora 0
Palestino 1 (Marquez 45)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Quintana (Par)

Mar 10
Wanderers 1 (Santos 23)
Palestino 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Velez (Col)

Mar 11
Boca Juniors 5 (Meli 8, Lodeiro 15, Carrizo 37, Osvaldo 69, pen 82)
Zamora 0
HT: 3-0. **Ref:** Buitrago (Col)

Mar 17
Zamora 1 (Murillo 18)
Boca Juniors 5 (Martinez 52, 90+2, Colazo 58, 71, Chavez 77)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Oliveira (Bra)
Sent off: Vargas (Zamora) 56

Mar 19
Palestino 1 (Silva 66)
Wanderers 1 (Silva 36)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Carrillo (Per)

Apr 7
Palestino 4 (Chaves 46, 85, Valencia 68, Vidangossy 88)
Zamora 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Maldonado (Bol)

Apr 9
Wanderers 0
Boca Juniors 3 (Calleri 9, 49, Monzon 74)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Ricci (Bra)
Sent off: Silva (Wanderers) 90+2

Apr 16
Boca Juniors 2 (Marin 82, Calleri 90+2)
Palestino 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Sampaio (Bra)

Apr 16
Zamora 0
Wanderers 3 (Santos 34, Albarracin 64, Rodriguez 88)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Caceres (Par)

LIBERTADORES CUP – GROUP 5 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Boca Jnrs (Q)	6	6	0	0	19	2	18
Wanderers (Q)	6	3	1	2	9	8	10
Palestino	6	2	1	3	6	6	7
Zamora	6	0	0	6	3	21	0

Group 6

Feb 18
Tigres (Mex) 3 (Guerron 38, 59, Duenas 65)
Juan Aurich (Per) 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Falce (Uru)

Feb 19
San Jose (Bol) 2 (Orue 81, Valverde 88)
River Plate (Arg) 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Fedorczuk (Uru)

Mar 5
Juan Aurich 2 (Valoyes 6, Ramos 23)
San Jose 0
HT: 2-0. **Ref:** Gamboa (Chl)

Mar 5
River Plate 1 (Sanchez 73)
Tigres 1 (Guerron 40)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Ricci (Bra)

Mar 11
San Jose 0
Tigres 1 (Escoto 39)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Cunha (Uru)

Mar 12
Juan Aurich 1 (Rengifo 67)
River Plate 1 (Balanta 22)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Quintana (Par)
Sent off: Cuba (Juan Aurich) 90+1

Mar 17
Tigres 4 (Guerron 2, Rafael Sobis 20, 85, Arevalo 78)
San Jose 0
HT: 2-0. **Ref:** Argote (Ven)

Mar 19
River Plate 1 (Mercado 26)
Juan Aurich 1 (Delgado 90)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Osorio (Chl)

Apr 7
San Jose 1 (Reyes 35)
Juan Aurich 1 (Delgado 42)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Zambrano (Ecu)

Apr 8
Tigres 2 (Arevalo 12, Alvarez 69)
River Plate 2 (Gutierrez 87, Mora 90)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Velez (Col)
Sent off: Mercado (River Plate) 90+4

Apr 15
Juan Aurich 4 (Pacheco 14, 83, Tejada 43, pen 52)
Tigres 5 (Esqueda 11, 17, 74, Villalpando 67, Espericueta 82)
HT: 2-2. **Ref:** Vera (Ecu)

Apr 15
River Plate 3 (Mora 43, pen 53, Gutierrez 55)
San Jose 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Cortez (Bra)

LIBERTADORES CUP – GROUP 6 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Tigres (Q)	6	4	2	0	16	7	14
River Plate (Q)	6	1	4	1	8	7	7
Juan Aurich	6	1	3	2	9	11	6
San Jose	6	1	1	4	3	11	4

Group 7

Feb 19
Libertad (Par) 2 (Gonzalez 20, Lopez pen 34)
Atletico Nacional (Col) 2 (Zeballos 5, Ruiz pen 60)
HT: 2-1. **Ref:** Ricci (Bra)

Feb 25
Estudiantes (Arg) 3 (Carrillo 16, 36, 75)
Barcelona (Ecu) 0
HT: 2-0. **Ref:** Lopes (Bra)

Mar 3
Barcelona 0
Libertad 1 (Recalde 78)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Fedorczuk (Uru)

Mar 5
Atletico Nacional 1 (Zeballos 43)
Estudiantes 1 (Jara 69)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Bascunan (Chl)

Mar 11
Barcelona 1 (Aleman 1)
Atletico Nacional 2 (Guerra 65, Ruiz 90+5)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Osses (Chl)
Sent off: Banguera (Barcelona) 90

Mar 12
Libertad 1 (Trellez 63)
Estudiantes 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Cortez (Bra)

Mar 18
Estudiantes 1 (Carrillo 80)
Libertad 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Marques (Bra)

Mar 19
Atletico Nacional 2 (Palomino 27, Mejia 71)
Barcelona 3 (Esterilla 38, Aleman 46, 52)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Vuaden (Bra)

Apr 9
Estudiantes 0
Atletico Nacional 1 (Mejia 37)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Fedorczuk (Uru)

Apr 9
Libertad 1 (Benitez 57)
Barcelona 1 (Esterilla 10)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Carrillo (Per)
Sent off: Oyola (Barcelona) 52

Apr 21
Atletico Nacional 4 (Mejia 29, Ruiz 51, 53, Copete 73)
Libertad 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Lopes (Bra)

Apr 21
Barcelona 0
Estudiantes 2 (Acosta 78, Carrillo 83)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Cunha (Uru)
Sent off: Checa (Barcelona) 66

LIBERTADORES CUP – GROUP 7 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
At Nacional (Q)	6	3	2	1	12	7	11
Estudiantes (Q)	6	3	1	2	7	3	10
Libertad	6	2	2	2	5	8	8
Barcelona	6	1	1	4	5	11	4

Group 8

Feb 17
Deportivo Tachira (Ven) 0
Racing Club (Arg) 5 (Lollo 21, Bou 40, 53, 69, Milito 56)
HT: 0-2. **Ref:** Bascunan (Chl)

Feb 18
Guarani (Par) 2 (Fernandez 70, Santander 84)
Sporting Cristal (Per) 2 (Pereyra 32, Ballon 48)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Cortez (Bra)

Feb 24
Racing Club 4 (Bou 44, 79, 82, Milito 48)
Guarani 1 (Santander 65)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Cunha (Uru)

Feb 24
Sporting Cristal 1 (Lobaton 27)
Deportivo Tachira 1 (Gonzalez 88)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Machado (Col)

Mar 10
Guarani 5 (Ocampo 10, Mendoza 35, Santander pen 40, Benitez 41, Fernandez 88)
Deportivo Tachira 2 (Gonzalez 17, Lopez 49)
HT: 4-1. **Ref:** Haro (Per)
Sent off: A Flores (Dep Tachira) 61; Bartomeus (Guarani) 82

Mar 10
Racing Club 1 (Fernandez 67)
Sporting Cristal 2 (Lobaton 58, pen 81)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Zambrano (Ecu)

Mar 17
Sporting Cristal 0
Racing Club 2 (Milito pen 77, Videla 89)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Fedorczuk (Uru)

Mar 18
Deportivo Tachira 1 (Gonzalez pen 21)
Guarani 1 (Benitez pen 42)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Buitrago (Col)

Apr 7
Guarani 2 (Santander 67, Palau 81)
Racing Club 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Lopes (Bra)

Apr 8
Deportivo Tachira 0
Sporting Cristal 0
Ref: Orozco (Bol)
Sent off: Chavez (Sporting Cristal) 90+1

Apr 14
Racing Club 3 (Milito 58, Bou 70, Fernandez 90+1)
Deportivo Tachira 2 (Meza 30, 49)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Orbe (Ecu)

Apr 14
Sporting Cristal 1 (Blanco 59)
Guarani 1 (Santander 14)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Bascunan (Chl)

LIBERTADORES CUP – GROUP 8 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Racing (Q)	6	4	0	2	15	7	12
Guarani (Q)	6	2	3	1	12	10	9
Sport'g Cristal	6	1	4	1	6	7	7
Dep Tachira	6	0	3	3	6	15	3

● *Top 2 in each group qualified for 1st knockout round (last 16)*

CHILE

2014-15 – CLAUSURA – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Cobresal (C)	17	10	4	3	29	20	34
Colo Colo	17	10	2	5	32	21	32
Huachipato	17	9	4	4	29	28	31
Univ Catolica	17	8	5	4	40	31	29
U La Calera	17	8	3	6	33	26	27
U Concepcion	17	8	3	6	27	26	27
Univ de Chile	17	8	2	7	36	27	26
San Marcos	17	6	6	5	26	19	24
O'Higgins	17	6	6	5	21	23	24
U Espanola	17	6	5	6	20	23	23
Audax Italiano	17	5	6	6	23	24	21
Dep Iquique	17	6	3	8	27	30	21
Antofagasta	17	6	2	9	25	27	20
Cobreloa[1] (R)[2]	17	6	4	7	22	23	19
Nublense (R)[2]	17	5	4	8	19	21	19
Palestino	17	5	4	8	26	34	19
S Wanderers	17	4	5	8	21	26	17
Barnechea (R)[2]	17	2	2	13	13	40	8

[1]3pts deducted for breaching league regulations
[2]The 3 teams with the lowest points-per-game average over the 2 most recent seasons were relegated

VENEZUELA

2014-15 – CLAUSURA – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Tachira (C)	17	13	2	2	40	17	41
Caracas	17	12	3	2	23	11	39
Zamora	17	11	3	3	29	14	36
Anzoategui	17	9	4	4	31	23	31
Lara	17	7	7	3	22	18	28
Mineros	17	7	4	6	23	23	25
La Guaira	17	7	3	7	23	20	24
Aragua	17	6	4	7	25	25	22
Atl Venezuela	17	5	6	6	17	15	21
Zulia	17	6	3	8	14	18	21
Trujillanos	17	5	5	7	15	20	20
Metropolitanos	17	5	4	8	21	26	19
Petare	17	4	4	9	7	14	16
Tucanes	17	3	7	7	6	22	16
Carabobo	17	4	3	10	20	26	15
Llaneros	17	4	2	11	24	32	14
Estudiantes[1]	17	6	4	7	18	21	13
Portuguesa	17	3	4	10	17	30	13

No relegation this season
[1]9pts deducted for failing to pay players

AFRICA

CAF CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

2nd round

1st legs - Apr 18/19; 2nd legs - May 1-3
AC Leopards (Con) v Smouha (Egy)
1-0, 0-2 (agg 1-2)
Al Merreikh (Sud) v Esperance (Tun)
1-0, 1-2 (agg 2-2, Al Merreikh on away goals)
MC El Eulma (Alg) v CS Sfaxien (Tun)
1-0, 0-1 (agg 1-1, MC El Eulma 7-6 on pens)
Moghreb Tetouan (Mor) v Al Ahly (Egy)
1-0, 0-1 (agg 1-1, Moghreb Tetouan 4-3 on pens)
Raja Casablanca (Mor) v ES Setif (Alg)
2-2, 2-2 (agg 4-4, ES Setif 4-1 on pens)
Sanga Balende (DRC) v Al Hilal (Sud)
0-1, 0-1 (agg 0-2)
Stade Malien (Mli) v TP Mazembe (DRC)
2-2, 1-2 (agg 3-4)
USM Alger (Alg) v AS Kaloum (Gui)
2-1, 1-1 (agg 3-2)

● *Winners qualified for group stage; losers enter Confederation Cup at play-off round stage*

Group stage draw

Group A: Al Hilal, Moghreb Tetouan, Smouha, TP Mazembe.
Group B: Al Merreikh, ES Setif, MC El Eulma, USM Alger.
Ties to be played June 26-Sep 13
● *Top 2 in both groups qualify for semi-finals*

CONFEDERATION CUP

2nd round

1st legs - Apr 17-19; 2nd legs - May 1-3
ASO Chlef (Alg) v Club Africain (Tun)
1-1, 0-1 (agg 1-2)
CF Mounana (Gab) v Orlando Pirates (SAf)
2-2, 0-3 (agg 2-5)
Djoliba (Mli) v Hearts of Oak (Gha)
1-2, 1-0 (agg 2-2, Hearts of Oak on away goals)
Onze Createurs (Mli) v ASEC Abidjan (IvC)
0-1, 0-2 (agg 0-3)
Royal Leopards (Swa) v AS Vita (DRC)
1-0, 1-4 (agg 2-4)
Warri Wolves (Nga) v MK Etancheite (DRC)
2-1, 1-0 (agg 3-1)
Young Africans (Tan) v Etoile Sahel (Tun)
1-1, 0-1 (agg 1-2)
Zamalek (Egy) v FUS Rabat (Mor)
0-0, 3-2 (agg 3-2)

DJIBOUTI

2014-15 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Ali Sabieh (C)	18	14	3	1	54	16	45
Port	18	12	3	3	35	18	39
Garde Rep'can	18	10	2	6	40	21	32
Dikhil	18	8	7	3	25	16	31
Tadjourah	18	7	5	6	28	28	26
Hopital B'ala	18	6	2	10	20	25	20
CDE-Colas	18	5	5	8	19	25	20
Gendarmerie	18	6	1	11	19	31	19
Jago (R)	18	3	3	12	18	50	12
Horizon (R)	18	2	3	13	20	48	9

LESOTHO

2014-15 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Lioli (C)	26	19	6	1	49	7	63
Bantu	26	16	8	2	45	16	56
LCS	26	13	8	5	31	17	47
Matlama	26	12	10	4	36	16	46
Defence Force	26	13	7	6	31	22	46
Likila	26	9	9	8	32	27	36
Likhopo	26	9	8	9	31	30	35
Sundawana	26	8	5	13	24	34	29
LMPS	26	8	5	13	19	32	29
Linare	26	8	4	14	18	24	28
Kick4Life	26	7	4	15	28	31	25
Mphatlal'sane	26	5	10	11	18	33	25
Nyenye (R)	26	6	6	14	18	37	24
Qoaling (R)	26	1	6	19	16	70	9

NAMIBIA

2014-15 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Af'can Stars (C)	30	21	5	4	52	15	68
Black Africa	30	17	10	3	51	21	61
Tura Magic	30	16	8	6	53	28	56
Tigers	30	16	7	7	45	24	55
Blue Waters	30	14	10	6	45	32	52
Orlando P'tes	30	15	5	10	40	35	50
Civics	30	11	11	8	34	25	44
Mighty Gun'rs	30	11	6	13	40	42	39
Citizens	30	9	10	11	33	35	37
UNAM	30	9	10	11	35	44	37
United Stars	30	10	4	16	31	43	34
Eleven Arrows	30	8	9	13	39	45	33
Julinho	30	9	5	16	28	54	32
Touch & Go (R)	30	8	7	15	38	50	31
Rebels (R)	30	4	6	20	20	54	18
Benfica (R)	30	3	5	22	20	57	14

SOUTH AFRICA

2014-15 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Kaizer C'fs (C)	30	21	6	3	41	14	69
Mamelodi S	30	16	9	5	44	24	57
Bidvest Wits	30	15	7	8	34	25	52
Orlando P'tes	30	13	11	6	46	29	50
Ajax Cape T'wn	30	12	8	10	34	35	44
SuperSport	30	12	5	13	39	40	41
Bloemfontein	30	11	7	12	34	27	40
Maritzburg	30	10	10	10	30	25	40
Free State S's	30	10	8	12	34	39	38
Black Aces	30	7	13	10	35	39	34
Platinum Stars	30	8	10	12	30	38	34
Polokwane	30	9	7	14	42	60	34
Univ Pretoria	30	7	11	12	28	32	32
Chippa Utd	30	7	9	14	23	37	30
Moroka Sw's[1]	30	8	6	16	30	47	30
AmaZulu (R)	30	6	9	15	31	44	27

[1]Enter rel/prom play-offs

Previous winners (3 most recent)
2011-12 Orlando Pirates
2012-13 Kaizer Chiefs
2013-14 Mamelodi Sundowns

TANZANIA

2014-15 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Y Africans (C)	26	17	4	5	52	18	55
Azam	26	13	10	3	36	18	49
Simba	26	13	8	5	38	19	47
Mbeya City	26	8	10	8	22	22	34
Coastal Union	26	8	10	8	21	25	34
Kagera Sugar	26	8	8	10	22	26	32
Mtibwa Sugar	26	7	10	9	25	26	31
Ruvu Stars	26	8	7	11	20	25	31
Ndanda	26	8	7	11	21	29	31
Stand United	26	8	7	11	23	34	31
Prisons	26	5	14	7	18	22	29
Mgambo	26	8	5	13	18	28	29
Ruvu Shoot (R)	26	7	8	11	16	29	29
Polisi M'ro (R)	26	5	10	11	16	27	25

CONCACAF

CONCACAF CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Final

1st leg
Apr 22
America (Mex) 1 (Peralta 89)
Montreal Impact (Can) 1 (Piatti 16)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 56,783. **Ref:** Rodriguez (Hnd)
America: Munoz - Paul Aguilar, Pimentel, Pablo Aguilar, Samudio, Pellerano (Guerrero 70), Martinez (Peralta 46), Arroyo, Sambueza, Quintero, Benedetto (Zuniga 80).
Montreal Impact: Bush - Camara (Miller 66), Soumare, Ciman, Toia, Romero, Reo-Coker (Bernier 76), Mallace, Duka (Tissot 71), Piatti, Oduro.

2nd leg
Apr 29
Montreal Impact 2 (Romero 8, McInerney 89)
America 4 (Benedetto 50, 67, 81, Peralta 65)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 61,004. **Ref:** Bejarano (CR)
America 5-3 on agg
Montreal Impact: Nicht - Reo-Coker, Soumare, Ciman, Toia (Tissot 70), Mallace (Bernier 79), Donadel (McInerney 68), Romero, Piatti, Duka, Oduro.
America: Munoz - Paul Aguilar, Alvarado, Pablo Aguilar, Samudio, Quintero (Maduena 82), Guerrero, Martinez, Sambueza (Mares 87), Peralta (Arroyo 85), Benedetto.

Previous winners (5 most recent)
2009-10 Pachuca (Mex)
2010-11 Monterrey (Mex)
2011-12 Monterrey (Mex)
2012-13 Monterrey (Mex)
2013-14 Cruz Azul (Mex)

ANGUILLA

2014-15 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Kicks Utd (C)	12	8	3	1	41	7	27
Roaring Lions	12	8	3	1	41	10	27
Attackers	12	8	3	1	28	8	27
Salsa Ballers	12	6	1	5	28	18	19
ALHCS Spartan	12	3	0	9	12	30	9
Diamond	12	2	0	10	13	34	6
Dock's Utd	12	2	0	10	5	61	6

DOMINICA

2014-15 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Exodus (C)	14	10	3	1	29	15	33
Sagicor SE	14	9	2	3	31	19	29
Bath Estate	14	9	1	4	35	20	28
Dublanc	14	5	5	4	27	18	20
Nthn Bombers	14	5	3	6	24	23	18
Harlem Utd	14	5	1	8	22	27	16
Aicons	14	3	1	10	15	31	10
Mahaut	14	1	2	11	11	41	5

TRINIDAD & TOBAGO

2014-15 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Central (C)	24	17	4	3	63	19	55
W Connection	24	15	4	5	47	20	49
Defence Force	24	12	3	9	46	31	39
NE Stars	24	9	7	8	25	25	34
Point Fortin	24	10	3	11	45	43	33
SJ Jabloteh	24	8	7	9	33	41	31
Police	24	8	6	10	35	46	30
Caledonia AIA	24	7	6	11	31	43	27
St Ann's	24	1	2	21	21	78	5

ASIA

AFC CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Group A
Feb 24: Persepolis (Irn) 3 Lekhwiya (Qat) 0; Al Nassr (Sau) 1 Bunyodkor (Uzb) 1.
Mar 3: Bunyodkor 0 Persepolis 1; Lekhwiya 1 Al Nassr 1.
Mar 17: Bunyodkor 0 Lekhwiya 1; Al Nassr 3 Persepolis 0.
Apr 8: Lekhwiya 1 Bunyodkor 0; Persepolis 1 Al Nassr 0.
Apr 22: Bunyodkor 0 Al Nassr 1; Lekhwiya 3 Persepolis 0.
May 6: Al Nassr 1 Lekhwiya 3; Persepolis 2 Bunyodkor 1.

AFC CHAMPIONS LEAGUE – GROUP A – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Lekhwiya (Q)	6	4	1	1	9	5	13
Persepolis (Q)	6	4	0	2	7	7	12
Al Nassr	6	2	2	2	7	6	8
Bunyodkor	6	0	1	5	2	7	1

Group B
Feb 24: Pakhtakor (Uzb) 2 Naft Tehran (Irn) 1; Al Ain (UAE) 0 Al Shabab (Sau) 0.
Mar 3: Naft T 1 Al Ain 1; Al Shabab 2 Pakhtakor 2.
Mar 18: Pakhtakor 0 Al Ain 1; Naft T 2 Al Shabab 1.
Apr 7: Al Ain 1 Pakhtakor 1; Al Shabab 0 Naft T 3.
Apr 22: Naft T 1 Pakhtakor 1; Al Shabab 0 Al Ain 1.
May 6: Pakhtakor 0 Al Shabab 2; Al Ain 3 Naft T 0.

AFC CHAMPIONS LEAGUE – GROUP B – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Al Ain (Q)	6	3	3	0	7	2	12
Naft Tehran (Q)	6	2	2	2	8	8	8
Pakhtakor	6	1	3	2	6	8	6
Al Shabab	6	1	2	3	5	8	5

Group C
Feb 25: Foolad Khouzestan (Irn) 0 Al Sadd (Qat) 0; Al Hilal (Sau) 3 Lokomotiv Tashkent (Uzb) 1.
Mar 4: Lokomotiv Tashkent 1 Foolad Khouzestan 1; Al Sadd 1 Al Hilal 0.
Mar 17: Foolad Khouzestan 0 Al Hilal 0; Al Sadd 6 Lokomotiv Tashkent 2.
Apr 8: Lokomotiv Tashkent 5 Al Sadd 0; Al Hilal 2 Foolad Khouzestan 0.
Apr 21: Lokomotiv Tashkent 1 Al Hilal 2; Al Sadd 1 Foolad Khouzestan 0.
May 5: Foolad Khouzestan 1 Lokomotiv Tashkent 0; Al Hilal 2 Al Sadd 1.

AFC CHAMPIONS LEAGUE – GROUP C – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Al Hilal (Q)	6	4	1	1	9	4	13
Al Sadd (Q)	6	3	1	2	9	9	10
Foolad	6	1	3	2	2	4	6
Lokomotiv	6	1	1	4	10	13	4

Group D
Feb 25: Nasaf Qarshi (Uzb) 2 Tractor Sazi (Irn) 1; Al Ahli (UAE) 3 Al Ahli (Sau) 3.
Mar 4: Tractor Sazi 1 Al Ahli (UAE) 0; Al Ahli (Sau) 2 Nasaf Qarshi 1.
Mar 18: Al Ahli (UAE) 0 Nasaf Qarshi 0; Al Ahli (Sau) 2 Tractor Sazi 0.
Apr 7: Tractor Sazi 2 Al Ahli (Sau) 2; Nasaf Qarshi 0 Al Ahli (UAE) 1.

Apr 21: Tractor Sazi 1 Nasaf Qarshi 2; Al Ahli (Sau) 2 Al Ahli (UAE) 1.
May 5: Al Ahli (UAE) 3 Tractor Sazi 2; Nasaf Qarshi 0 Al Ahli (Sau) 0.

AFC CHAMPIONS LEAGUE – GROUP D – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Al Ahli (Sau) (Q)	6	3	3	0	11	7	12
Al Ahli (UAE) (Q)	6	2	2	2	8	8	8
Nasaf Qarshi	6	2	2	2	5	5	8
Tractor Sazi	6	1	1	4	7	11	4

Group E

Feb 24: Jeonbuk Motors (SKo) 0 Kashiwa Reysol (Jap) 0; Binh Duong (Vie) 2 Shandong Luneng (Chn) 3.
Mar 3: Shandong Luneng 1 Jeonbuk Motors 4; Kashiwa Reysol 5 Binh Duong 1.
Mar 17: Jeonbuk Motors 3 Binh Duong 0; Kashiwa Reysol 2 Shandong Luneng 1.
Apr 8: Shandong Luneng 4 Kashiwa Reysol 4; Binh Duong 1 Jeonbuk Motors 1.
Apr 22: Kashiwa Reysol 3 Jeonbuk Motors 2; Shandong Luneng 3 Binh Duong 1.
May 6: Jeonbuk Motors 4 Shandong Luneng 1; Binh Duong 1 Kashiwa Reysol 0.

AFC CHAMPIONS LEAGUE – GROUP E – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Kashiwa (Q)	6	3	2	1	14	9	11
Jeonbuk (Q)	6	3	2	1	14	6	11
Shandong	6	2	1	3	13	17	7
Binh Duong	6	1	1	4	6	15	4

Group F

Feb 24: Gamba Osaka (Jap) 0 Guangzhou R&F (Chn) 2; Buriram United (Tha) 2 Seongnam (SKo) 1.
Mar 3: Seongnam 2 Gamba Osaka 0; Guangzhou R&F 1 Buriram United 2.
Mar 17: Guangzhou R&F 0 Seongnam 1.
Mar 18: Gamba Osaka 1 Buriram United 1.
Apr 7: Seongnam 0 Guangzhou R&F 0; Buriram United 1 Gamba Osaka 2.
Apr 22: Seongnam 2 Buriram United 1; Guangzhou R&F 0 Gamba Osaka 5.
May 6: Gamba Osaka 2 Seongnam 1; Buriram United 5 Guangzhou R&F 0.

AFC CHAMPIONS LEAGUE – GROUP F – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Gamba (Q)	6	3	1	2	10	7	10
Seongnam (Q)	6	3	1	2	7	5	10
Buriram Utd	6	3	1	2	12	7	10
Gua'zhou R&F	6	1	1	4	3	13	4

Group G

Feb 25: Brisbane Roar (Aus) 0 Beijing Guoan (Chn) 1; Suwon Bluewings (SKo) 2 Urawa Reds (Jap) 1.
Mar 4: Urawa Reds 0 Brisbane Roar 1; Beijing Guoan 1 Suwon Bluewings 0.
Mar 17: Beijing Guoan 2 Urawa Reds 0.
Mar 18: Brisbane Roar 3 Suwon Bluewings 3.
Apr 8: Urawa Reds 1 Beijing Guoan 1; Suwon Bluewings 3 Brisbane Roar 1.
Apr 21: Urawa Reds 1 Suwon Bluewings 2; Beijing Guoan 0 Brisbane Roar 1.
May 5: Brisbane Roar 1 Urawa Reds 2; Suwon Bluewings 1 Beijing Guoan 1.

AFC CHAMPIONS LEAGUE – GROUP G – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Beijing (Q)	6	3	2	1	6	3	11
Suwon (Q)	6	3	2	1	11	8	11
Brisbane Roar	6	2	1	3	7	9	7
Urawa Reds	6	1	1	4	5	9	4

Group H

Feb 25: Kashima Antlers (Jap) 1 Western Sydney Wanderers (Aus) 3; Guangzhou Evergrande (Chn) 1 Seoul (SKo) 0.
Mar 4: Western Sydney Wanderers 2 Guangzhou Evergrande 3; Seoul 1 Kashima Antlers 0.
Mar 18: Seoul 0 Western Sydney Wanderers 0; Guangzhou Evergrande 4 Kashima Antlers 3.
Apr 7: Western Sydney Wanderers 1 Seoul 1; Kashima Antlers 2 Guangzhou Evergrande 1.
Apr 21: Western Sydney Wanderers 1 Kashima Antlers 2; Seoul 0 Guangzhou Evergrande 0.
May 5: Guangzhou Evergrande 0 Western Sydney Wanderers 2; Kashima Antlers 2 Seoul 3.

AFC CHAMPIONS LEAGUE – GROUP H – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Gua'zhou E (Q)	6	3	1	2	9	9	10
Seoul (Q)	6	2	3	1	5	4	9
West Sydney	6	2	2	2	9	7	8
Kashima	6	2	0	4	10	13	6

● *Top 2 in each group qualified for 1st knockout round (last 16)*

GUAM

2014-15 – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Rovers (C)	18	14	2	2	125	34	44
Strykers	18	14	2	2	90	25	44
Q Distributors	18	9	1	8	59	58	28
Shipyard	18	8	2	8	61	38	26
Sthn Cobras	18	6	2	10	75	61	20
Sidekicks[1]	17	4	3	10	39	65	15
Doosan[1]	17	1	0	16	12	180	3

[1]*Sidekicks v Doosan not played*

HONG KONG

2014-15 – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Kitchee (C)	16	11	3	2	40	18	36
Eastern	16	10	3	3	34	20	33
Sun Pegasus	16	8	3	5	34	23	27
South China	16	7	6	3	30	17	27
YFCMD	16	8	2	6	25	29	26
Yuen Long	16	5	2	9	20	31	17
Rangers	16	4	2	10	20	33	14
Wong Tai Sin	16	3	5	8	20	29	14
W Tai Po (R)	16	1	4	11	17	40	7

KUWAIT

2014-15 – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Kuwait SC (C)	26	20	6	0	69	12	66
Al Arabi	26	21	3	2	66	12	66
Al Jahra	26	17	6	3	56	24	57
Al Qadsia	26	17	5	4	61	21	56
Al Salmiya	26	16	6	4	69	25	54
Kazma	26	16	5	5	60	30	53
Al Sulibkat	26	9	6	11	26	34	33
Khaitan	26	8	6	12	32	40	30
Al Naser	26	6	5	15	24	41	23
Al Yarmouk	26	4	7	15	27	48	19
Al Shabab	26	4	6	16	18	59	18
Al Sahel	26	3	5	18	26	72	14
Al Fahaheel	26	3	4	19	24	70	13
Al Tadamun	26	2	2	22	17	87	8

LEBANON

2014-15 – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Al Ahed (C)	22	16	3	3	42	10	51
Al Ansar	22	13	4	5	31	19	43
Al Nejmeh	22	11	6	5	26	18	39
Tripoli SC	22	10	3	9	36	24	33
Safa	22	8	6	8	26	28	30
Al Nabi Sheet	22	8	6	8	30	36	30
Salam Zgharta	22	7	6	9	33	40	27
Al Sahel	22	7	3	12	25	28	24
Al Ghazieh	22	6	6	10	29	38	24
Racing	22	6	5	11	18	30	23
Tadamon (R)	22	5	7	10	17	31	22
Akhaa Ahli (R)	22	5	5	12	18	29	20

PALESTINE (West Bank)

2014-15 – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Al Dahiriya (C)	22	14	6	2	32	10	48
Markaz Balata	22	14	5	3	57	26	47
Hilal Al Quds	22	13	4	5	39	23	43
Thaqafi	22	12	4	6	30	21	40
Taraji Wadi	22	9	3	10	28	25	30
Al Khader	22	8	5	9	33	30	29
Ahli Al Khalil	22	8	4	10	29	33	28
Al Am'ari	22	6	7	9	19	21	25
Dora	22	7	4	11	33	44	25
Al Khaleel	22	7	4	11	17	32	25
Al Mukaber (R)	22	5	2	15	21	48	17
Yatta (R)	22	2	6	14	21	46	12

QATAR

2014-15 – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Lekhwiya (C)	26	19	5	2	59	25	62
Al Sadd	26	17	6	3	68	35	57
El Jaish	26	15	2	9	54	33	47
Qatar SC	26	14	4	8	51	40	46
Al Ahli	26	11	5	10	48	40	38
Umm Salal	26	10	7	9	43	37	37
Al Gharafa	26	11	3	12	48	54	36
Al Arabi	26	9	8	9	43	38	35
Al Kharaitiyat	26	8	10	8	37	38	34
Al Khor	26	7	9	10	38	48	30
Al Sailiya	26	8	5	13	40	54	29
Al Wakrah	26	6	5	15	34	52	23
Al Sha'nia (R)	26	5	5	16	26	57	20
Al Shamal (R)	26	1	8	17	24	62	11

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

2014-15 – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Al Ain (C)	26	18	6	2	62	19	60
Al Jazira	26	16	3	7	66	46	51
Al Shabab	26	14	7	5	49	35	49
Al Wahda	26	13	8	5	44	32	47
Al Nasr	26	10	9	7	43	32	39
Al Wasl	26	10	9	7	53	45	39
Al Ahli	26	10	8	8	35	27	38
Bani Yas	26	9	8	9	42	37	35
Al Fujairah	26	9	5	12	23	45	32
Emirates	26	8	6	12	34	45	30
Al Dhafra	26	5	12	9	31	33	27
Al Sharjah	26	7	5	14	36	43	26
Ajman (R)	26	2	9	15	27	60	15
Ittihad K'ba (R)	26	3	1	22	17	63	10

OCEANIA

OFC CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Group A

Apr 11: Pirae (Tah) 3 Lupe Ole Soaga (Sam) 3; Ba (Fij) 3 Gaitcha (NC) 0.
Apr 14: Lupe Ole Soaga 1 Ba 3; Gaitcha 5 Pirae 2.
Apr 18: Gaitcha 8 Lupe Ole Soaga 1; Pirae 0 Ba 2.

OFC CHAMPIONS LEAGUE – GROUP A – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Ba (Q)	3	3	0	0	8	1	9
Gaitcha (Q)	3	2	0	1	13	6	6
Pirae	3	0	1	2	5	10	1
Lupe Ole Soaga	3	0	1	2	5	14	1

Group B

Apr 11: Auckland City (NZ) 3 Suva (Fij) 0; Western United (Sol) 0 Amicale (Van) 1.
Apr 14: Auckland City 3 Western United 0; Amicale 3 Suva 2.
Apr 18: Suva 3 Western United 1; Amicale 0 Auckland City 3.

OFC CHAMPIONS LEAGUE – GROUP B – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Auckland (Q)	3	3	0	0	9	0	9
Amicale	3	2	0	1	4	5	6
Suva	3	1	0	2	5	7	3
Western Utd	3	0	0	3	1	7	0

Group C

Apr 12: Tafea (Van) 2 Hekari United (PNG) 3; Team Wellington (NZ) 2 Tefana (Tah) 1.
Apr 15: Hekari United 0 Team Wellington 2; Tefana 1 Tafea 1.
Apr 17: Tefana 2 Hekari United 3; Tafea 2 Team Wellington 3.

OFC CHAMPIONS LEAGUE – GROUP C – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Wellington (Q)	3	3	0	0	7	3	9
Hekari Utd	3	2	0	1	6	6	6
Tefana	3	0	1	2	4	6	1
Tafea	3	0	1	2	5	7	1

● *Group winners and the runner-up with the best record qualified for semi-finals*

Semi-finals

Apr 21: Gaitcha 0 Auckland City 1; Ba 0 Team Wellington 2.

Final

Apr 26 - Suva, Fiji (ANZ)
Auckland City 1 (Joao Moreira 16)
Team Wellington 1 (Hogg 79)
Aet. Auckland City 4-3 on pens
HT: 1-0. **90mins:** 1-1. **Ref:** Hauata (Tah)
Auckland: Williams - Djordjevic, Berlanga, White, Iwata, Vicelich (McGeorge 98), Bilen, Carril (Kim 89), Joao Moreira (Souto 85), De Vries, Browne.
Wellington: O'Keeffe - Hogg, Scott (Myers 78), Robertson, Feneridis, Peverley, Gwyther, Bale, Gulley, Jackson (Lovemore 33), Corrales. *Sent off: Bale 112.*

Previous winners (3 most recent)
2011-12 Auckland City (NZ)
2012-13 Auckland City (NZ)
2013-14 Auckland City (NZ)

NEW ZEALAND

2014-15 Championship Final

Apr 5: Auckland City 2 Hawke's Bay United 1.

KEY TO TABLES
(C) = champions (R) = relegated
(Q) = qualified for next stage

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World Soccer's GREAT MATCHES

JULY 23, 1966, GOODISON PARK, LIVERPOOL: WORLD CUP QUARTER-FINAL

Portugal 5 North Korea 3

Eusebio, Portugal's 'Black Pearl', scores four goals to deny giant-killers a place in the semi-finals of the 1966 World Cup

Fightback...Eusebio puts Portugal back in the game

Ken Oultram began his *World Soccer* report of this epic encounter: "If anyone ever tries to tell me that height makes a difference in football then I shall always refer to this truly remarkable and memorable World Cup quarter-final."

He was, of course, referring to North Korea, who had fought back from an opening defeat by Russia to draw with Chile and then shock Italy with a 1-0 victory in Middlesbrough.

For 25 minutes of this game they threatened to cause another upset, this time against a Portugal side containing the likes of Mario Coluna, Jose Torres and the "Black Pearl" himself, Eusebio.

Oultram wrote: "Statistically inferior, the Koreans – average height only 5ft 9in – were neither out-headed nor outplayed.

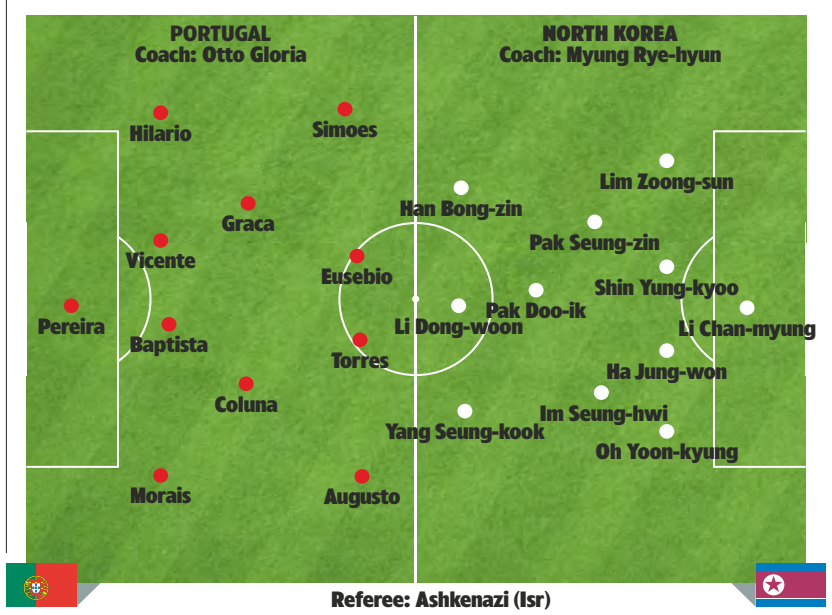
"They lost purely and simply to the strength and skill of just one man, the great Eusebio, who took the game by the scruff of the neck when all seemed lost for Portugal. I will never forget the three goals, without reply, by the Koreans inside the opening 25 minutes. I will never forget their superlative fitness or their fantastic body swerves and footwork which carried them past one...two...three opponents.

"The Koreans knew only one way to play and that was in a forward direction. If they had had the 'know-how' to muster in defence they might have stopped the great Eusebio and his four goals. But who could have stopped a Eusebio in this kind of form anyway?"

The game was played at a frantic pace and the Koreans did not stop running and chasing. But they couldn't defend their lead. And they didn't have a Eusebio.

Inspired by his four goals, Portugal fought back from a calamitous opening quarter to become only the second team in World Cup history to win after being 3-0 down. And no team has done it since. WS

Joy...Korea celebrate



Referee: Ashkenazi (Isr)

KEY MOMENTS

Unbelievable...Korea go two up at Goodison

1 min Pak Seung-zin scores with a left-foot shot from the edge of the penalty area. **0-1**

22 min North Korea break out of defence and a deep cross from the right is sent back across goal by Yang Seung-kook for Li Dong-woon to turn home. **0-2**

24 min Yang Seung-iook runs onto a deflected shot from Pak Doo-ik and works an opening to score. **0-3**

27 min Eusebio receives the ball inside the penalty area from Antonio Simoes and finishes with a right-foot shot. **1-3**

42 min A penalty is awarded to Portugal after Jose Torres is tripped in the area when through on goal. Eusebio dispatches the spot kick. **2-3**

57 min Eusebio finds Simoes on the halfway line and collects a return pass before firing high into the net. **3-3**

Ahead...Eusebio puts Portugal in front

59 min Eusebio is fouled in the area and dispatches the resultant penalty himself. **4-3**

79 min A deep corner by Eusebio is headed back by Torres and Jose Augusto heads in. **5-3**

All over...Augusto heads home number five

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